
Original Article

Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky: Anarchy in the mirror of uneven and combined development

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Abstract Waltz's neorealist theory has been charged with falsely separating geopolitical from social and economic processes. Yet Waltz's critics themselves have failed to show how sociological and geopolitical phenomena can be explained in a unified international theory. Such a theory, says Waltz, would have to pass three tests. It must delimit a field of specifically international phenomena. It must identify structured (and hence theorizable) effects within this field. And it must furnish 'a brilliant intuition', which reveals the causal relations that explain these effects. This article argues that the idea of 'uneven and combined development' (U&CD) can pass these tests. The article delimits 'the international' as those phenomena arising from the interactive multiplicity of societies. Next, it uses Gerschenkron's theory of backwardness to identify internationally structured effects arising from societal multiplicity. And finally, by considering the debate on the First World War, it explores how the causal mechanisms identified by U&CD can be used to construct a unified sociological and geopolitical explanation.

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Introduction

No feature of Kenneth Waltz's neorealist theory has attracted more criticism over the years than its analytical separation of domestic and international politics. Embodied in the contrast between 'unit-level' and 'system-level' phenomena, this separation has been widely challenged by interdependence theorists, historical sociologists, Marxists, post-structuralists, constructivists and even some realists (Ruggie, 1983; Ashley, 1984; Milner, 1991; Snyder, 1991; Buzan *et al*, 1993; Rosenberg, 1994; Teschke, 2003). These writers have



variously charged it with empirical implausibility, with producing a reified conception of international relations, and with an inability to conceptualize historical change. So loud has been the clamour that one might almost forget that Waltz had based the separation itself on a prior *failure* of all these other approaches. Unable to isolate and theorize specifically international causes, he argued, they had tended inevitably towards ‘reductionist’ explanation of one kind or another.

Three decades later, the force of Waltz’s original critique stands out more strongly than ever. Despite the many achievements of historical sociological approaches – whether Marxist, Weberian, Constructivist, Foucaultian or other – they have indeed largely concentrated on explaining the changing historical *forms* and dynamics of geopolitical behaviour, rather than explicitly theorizing the existence and causal significance of the international dimension itself. The peculiar outcome of this emphasis, quite contrary to its intention, has been

a danger that [it] serves to *strengthen the dichotomization* of ‘the international’ and ‘the domestic’. Although [...] international and domestic forces interact or combine to produce a certain outcome, analytically they are still distinct. (Hall, 1999, p. 108, emphasis added)

Nevertheless, there is a straightforward reason for this outcome: in the end, the question of number (that is, what follows from the multiplicity of societies) cannot be resolved back in its entirety to a question of form (that is, what follows from the specific internal character of the societies involved). As a result, it seems that sociological approaches always encounter international factors – such as military pressure or external cultural influences – whose existence is not given in the original premises of the social theory being deployed. At this point, the factors may be consigned to the status of untheorizable empirical contingency (as Theda Skocpol accused Barrington Moore of doing with the international context of the Chinese Revolution).¹ Alternatively, an additional theory may be invoked to explain them. Yet, social theorists such as Charles Tilly (1985), Michael Mann (1986), David Harvey (2003), Callinicos in Callinicos and Rosenberg (2008) and indeed Skocpol herself (1979), who *have* thus attributed a systematic causality to geopolitics, have tended to fall back on realist models of the latter – exposing themselves to the charge of reification earlier levelled against those models (Jarvis, 1989; Hobden and Hobson, 2002; Pozo-Martin, 2006). And either way, the separation of domestic and international has not been overcome.

Is the search for a unified theory of domestic and international politics therefore doomed to failure? And must international theory, to qualify as such, be restricted to the exclusively power-political definition that it assumes in neorealism? Responding to calls for a broader conception of the international, Waltz himself has allowed that ‘an international political–economic theory



would presumably be twice as good as a theory of international politics alone' (Waltz, 1990, p. 31). However, in order to remain a *theory* (rather than retreating into thick description), it would still need to satisfy three criteria that apply for 'any theory' (Waltz, 1979, p. 116).² First, it must still delimit a restricted 'object domain' or class of phenomena to be analysed. For 'the empirical fact that everything is related to everything else' does not entail that a theory must contain everything *in itself* – an error that surely does lead away from theory and towards mere description. Second, the proposed theory must also identify patterns of law-like behaviour and outcomes operating across this domain, patterns that signal the existence of social structures shaping actions. And finally, a theory must embody 'a brilliant intuition, a creative idea' (Waltz, 1979, p. 9), which, communicating 'a sense of the unobservable relations of things', provides a key to explaining 'actions and outcomes' within the 'bounded realm or domain' being analysed (Waltz, 1979, p. 116). If all this could be done for a wider set of phenomena than treated by neorealism, then it would indeed 'represent a long step toward a general theory of international relations'. However, he immediately added, 'no one has shown how to take' this step (Waltz, 1990, p. 32).

It will be argued below that such a theory of international relations can nevertheless be constructed, using Leon Trotsky's idea of 'uneven and combined development' (U&CD). It is a theory that meets Waltz's three requirements in the following way. First, it reconceptualizes the international as an object domain, defining it *sociologically* as 'that dimension of social reality which arises specifically from the co-existence within it of more than one society' (Rosenberg, 2006, p. 308). Within this alternative 'bounded realm', it identifies an entire class of inter-societal patterns, including but not restricted to the geopolitical structure analysed by Waltz. And finally, as a 'brilliant intuition' about the causal consequences of societal multiplicity, it also provides a key to explaining the 'actions and outcomes' to which these structures give rise.

Why might this idea potentially succeed – where so many others have failed – in overcoming the separation of domestic and international realms? The answer, it will be suggested below, is that Trotsky's idea pin-points and rectifies the original source of the separation itself. This source lies not in the shortcomings of realism but in the tendency of classical and subsequent *social* theory to conceptualize its object – 'society' or 'the social' – in the ontological singular. This problem has of course provided the traditional (realist) justification for separated theories of 'the autonomy of international relations' (Bull, 1966, p. 36). However, so long as the original problem remains unsolved, such international theories cannot reconnect to those properties of social reality which give rise to their subject matter. Moreover, they therefore escape one offspring of ontological singularity – correctly identified as sociological reductionism – only to meet with its twin in the form of a reification of geopolitics. Overcoming both problems will become possible only if we can find an

alternative to the unilinear conception of development – ontological singularity – which generates them. And this is what the idea of U&CD provides.

In the pages below, the case for these claims is set out in the following way. First, we shall confirm that the separation in question is no doctrinal fiat on Waltz's part, but rather an intractable problem that he has set aside for want of an available solution. Waltz himself expresses puzzlement about the source of this problem. And well he might. For, as already suggested, its roots lie outside IR, buried beneath the very traditions of social thought from which he is seeking to detach his theory. Yet, despite this apparent remoteness, the problem of ontological singularity extends its effects into neorealism itself in an unexpectedly direct and paradoxical way, through Waltz's use of ideas taken from Emile Durkheim. Neorealism, it turns out, cannot provide a plausible ontology of the international because it is itself built upon a peculiar variant of – of all things – the 'domestic analogy'.

Second, the idea of U&CD is introduced, showing how it overcomes this limitation and how it thereby enables a sociological analysis of irreducibly 'international' phenomena. Waltz's three challenges to a wider theory are faced in turn. Neorealism's 'bounded realm' of geopolitical anarchy is replaced by an alternative conception of 'the international' as the U&CD of societies. In a further paradoxical twist, it emerges that this entails an even larger significance for 'anarchy' than has been argued by Waltz himself. Next, the work of Alexander Gerschenkron (1962) is used to show how this revised conception of anarchy meets Waltz's second requirement, uncovering a *social developmental* structure in modern international relations, in addition to the *geopolitical* one identified by Waltz. Finally, the requirement of 'theory' itself – identification and explanation of 'the unobservable relations of things' (1979, p. 9) – is directly faced, using the causes of the First World War as an example. In contrast with neorealism, it is argued, the ability of U&CD to visualize *both* anarchical structures – the geopolitical and the social developmental – enables it to grasp in a single theory more of the 'necessary relations of cause and interdependency' (Waltz, 1979, p. 10) at work in producing the conjuncture of 1914.

A Problem Unsolved: Ontological Singularity

As Waltz himself has insisted, the call for a structural theory of international politics never entailed that domestic (or even non-political) phenomena were unimportant in producing international political outcomes. His actual claim, directed as much at earlier realists as at anyone else,³ was rather that inside-out forms of explanation were unable, by their nature, to grasp any causal factors that were specifically international in their constitution. And insofar as the



latter were in play, therefore, such forms of explanation would be insufficient on their own (Waltz, 1979, pp. 26, 48–49, 68; Waltz, 1988, pp. 617–618). Some further theoretical procedure was required to deal with these factors – a procedure that presupposed the possibility of identifying them in the first place. Distinguishing system-level from unit-level phenomena was therefore necessary, but this was no doctrine of factual separation: ‘I went to *such* lengths to emphasise in *Theory of International Politics* that you have to bring national politics and international politics together to understand or explain anything’ (Waltz, 1998, p. 380). Nor, having separated out the emergent, structural determinations from the unit-level ones, did he prioritize the former in such a way that could justify a charge that he had stood one (unit-level) reductionism on its head only to produce another (system-level) one.⁴ On the contrary, he specifically invoked ‘unit-level processes as a source both of changes *in* systems and of possible changes *of* systems’ (1986, p. 328, emphasis added). He even averred that ‘[c]hanges in, and transformation of, systems originate not in the structure of a system but in its parts’ (1986, p. 343). In other words, Waltz’s theory always allowed for much more traffic between domestic and international object domains than many of its critics acknowledged. All manner of interconnection was allowed for – required, even – in the explanation of concrete events.

Nevertheless, there must have been *some* reason for the storm of controversy that greeted the formulation of neorealism. And, in truth, the critics had not entirely imagined things: the object domains themselves did remain *conceptually* distinct. And the traffic between them did not itself form part of the object of the theory. ‘Students of international politics will do well’, Waltz wrote, ‘to concentrate on separate theories of internal and external politics until someone figures out a way to unite them’ (1986, p. 340). And yet, blunt as this injunction appears, it was also notable for its deliberately pragmatic justification: the separation, while endorsed, was not sealed with an *a priori* insistence of any kind.

After all, he might have argued that this separation was not just enduring but even necessary, on the oft-repeated grounds that ‘if you can’t think of [international politics] in itself, then you can’t have a theory of it’ (1998, p. 385). However, this was never the whole of his position. Indeed, in an interview for *Review of International Studies*, he insisted that ‘I’d be delighted not to make that choice’ between an internal and an external theory. A unified theory, were it possible,

... would be a lot better than a simple theory of international politics; I don’t see any *logical* reason why this can’t be done However, *nobody’s thought of how to do it*. I’ve thought about that a lot. I can’t figure out how. Neither can anybody else so far. (1998, pp. 379–380)



Thus, the issue was left open, and rightly so. For this scenario – in which an entire branch of social causality (‘the international’) resists being conceptualized as continuous with the wider social world in which we know it inheres – is a standing reproach to the social scientific imagination.

Yet the puzzle is real: if there is no ‘*logical* reason’ for the separation, why should it resist attempts to overcome it? Three possible explanations present themselves. One is that this separation is a premise of realist thought, and its persistence therefore reflects the deep hold of that approach on international theory (Rosenberg, 1994). However, such an explanation, though superficially attractive, becomes unconvincing on closer inspection. After all, Waltz criticized realism itself for failing to observe the separation consistently (1988, p. 615). Some realists (such as Snyder, 1991, p. 19), in reply, have been among those most strongly asserting the need to overcome it. And in any case, numerous ‘critical’ approaches, despite being non-realist, have themselves reproduced it. Thus, even if some of the limitations of realism are symptomatic of this separation, they cannot any longer be said to be its cause.

Perhaps then it simply is impossible, *in principle*, to ‘unite’ theories of domestic and international phenomena. However, as already implied, embracing such a notion would entail radical claims for an *ontological* discontinuity within the human social world, claims that Waltz himself has never made.

This leaves a third possibility: perhaps the ultimate source of the problem does indeed lie where the realists, Waltz included, have always argued: in the inherited tradition of classical social theory. Perhaps there really is something about the way ‘society’ itself has been conceptualized in both classical and subsequent social theory, which automatically generates ‘the international’ as not just a spatial but also a theoretical externality. Over the years, a substantial literature has accumulated *outside* IR, most recently under the heading of ‘methodological nationalism’, which asserts just this.

Sociological theory, it argues, has in the main operated with a conception of society as singular, unitary and self-contained (for example Nisbet, 1969; Skocpol, 1973 and 1979; Martins, 1974; Wolf, 1982; Tilly, 1984; Giddens, 1985; Mann, 1986; Bauman, 1992; Smelser, 1992; Tenbruck, 1994). Theorization of any given type of society has thus generally proceeded by first modelling its inner relational composition (its social structure), and then examining how its iterated reproduction in this form gives rise to immanent sources of development and change. *International* phenomena – which arise not from the particular inner form of any given society, but rather from the coexistence of more than one of them – might subsequently be allowed any amount of contingent empirical weight in a sociological analysis; however, they do not appear in the theorization of what a society is. And this explains why attempts to work from sociological to international theory have tended towards reductionism: this form of reflection, after all, can derive the international only as the domestic world of phenomena



extended outwards or writ large. What Hedley Bull (1966) called the ‘fallacy of the domestic analogy’ thus arises from a prior error of ontological singularity.

That ontological singularity should be a problem for sociological approaches in IR is unsurprising. That it should be so for *realism*, however, seems counter-intuitive. Does it not, on the contrary, provide realism’s *raison d’être*? Here is the crux. Realists, despite frequent identification of this problem, have never sought to resolve it at its social theoretical source.⁵ They have not responded by reworking the premises of social theory. Rather, they have taken it as a warrant for constructing a separate theory of international relations, even a theory of ‘the autonomy of international relations’ (Bull, 1966, p. 36). And by this route, the effects of the sociological problem have in fact been carried over into realist international theory, where they resurface in the inverted form of reification. How?

Reification is the fallacy of treating social artefacts as self-constituted entities and vesting in them powers, attributes and dispositions, which in fact they exhibit only by virtue of their social relational and agential content. As no one actually denies that geopolitics is a social practice, this fallacy operates in the case of realism more by default than by design: because the anarchical premise of realism is not derived sociologically (and in fact is routinely *counterposed* to sociological premises), all the results that flow from it do indeed seem to flow from ‘it’ as an irreducible and supra-social ‘fact’ about the world. Until this, ‘it’, whose inscrutable, thing-like quality reflects some reification, is shown to be a human social product, the parsing out of its consequences – be it ever so accurate – will simultaneously spread a veil of reification over them, disguising their actual origins and nature. This is why the separation of sociological and geopolitical explanation is such a problem.

But here the plot thickens. At a 2008 conference convened to celebrate Waltz’s work, panelists were asked to name the thinker most influential in their conception of International Relations.⁶ And Waltz himself, the arch-separator of sociological and international theory, did not hesitate to name a *sociologist*: Emile Durkheim. The undoubted strength of this influence – perhaps most evident in his ‘Reply to My Critics’ (Waltz, 1986) – appears to have baffling implications for a sociological critique of neorealism. For in Waltz’s theory, Durkheim’s ideas play two quite fundamental roles. His ontological argument that social systems give rise to emergent ‘social facts’ is used to posit the irreducibility of ‘system-level’ to ‘unit-level’ phenomena – to assert, that is, the existence of the specifically international dimension of political life. And his contrast between ‘organic’ and ‘mechanical’ forms of society (sometimes referred to by Waltz as ‘organic’ and ‘solidary’) is then used to characterize and explore the contrast between domestic and international social order. In combination then, these two uses of Durkheim are deployed in order to establish the facticity and distinctiveness of the international. In fact, however, they lead Waltz himself



straight back into the procedures of ‘domestic analogy’, preventing a genuinely sociological specification of the international. And it is the unsolved problem of ontological singularity that dictates this peculiar result. To see how, let us examine each of these two threads in turn.

In a personal communication to the author, Waltz has invoked Durkheim in direct response to the charge of reification formulated above. ‘I would’, he wrote, ‘... distinguish between reification and “social facts”’. By this he meant that the generic consequences of anarchy do indeed flow from the condition itself and not from any attributes of the participating units. Moreover, considered as a social fact, anarchy is an outcome that, being more than the sum of its parts, cannot be reduced to relations operating at any other level than the structural one at which it subsists. Once it exists, both the difference it makes and the knowledge we can have of it concern the consequences that flow from it, rather than any underlying constitutive being – for it is constituted precisely not below, but at an apex. The charge of reification, it follows, therefore has here, in principle, no ontological object.

There is an evident logic to this position. However, Durkheim’s argument about ‘social facts’, even though it includes the sensational injunction to *consider social facts as things* (Durkheim, 1938, p. 14), does not quite support it. Durkheim’s use of the term ‘thing’ was not at all intended to attribute self-sufficiency to the phenomena so described. (Hence, the nomenclature of ‘social facts’ does not entail that the danger of ‘reification’ is unreal or unimportant.) Its purpose was rather ‘to claim for the higher forms [of being] a degree of reality at least equal to that which is readily granted to the lower’ (1938, p. xliii) – to assert, that is, the facticity of the social. And on closer inspection, this turns out (unsurprisingly) to be a doctrine of emergence, not of autonomy. This is certainly consistent with Waltz’s own position, specifically with his critique of the ‘analytic fallacy’ (Waltz, 1979, p. 64). But for Durkheim the consequence is that while the social (and natural) world is indeed full of combinations of elements producing ‘phenomena ... the very germ of which cannot possibly be found in any of the separate elements’ (Durkheim, 1938, p. 102), this ban on reductionist explanation does not become a license to treat ‘social facts’ as pre-given starting points. True, he does also say that facts ‘constitute the point of departure of science’ (1938, p. 27), and even that ‘there is nothing to be gained by looking behind them to speculate on their reason for being ...’ (1938, p. xl). However, the context of these statements reveals them as a rejection of psychological or biological explanations, not a denial of causal ‘depth’ to the social world *per se*. Indeed, in the same text, Durkheim imputes a ‘substratum’ to social facts (1938, p. 3). In line with this, he concludes that ‘[t]he determining cause of a social fact should be sought in the social facts preceding it ...’ (1938, p. 110). And ‘[w]e must, then, seek the explanation of social life in the nature of society itself’ (1938, p. 102).



But that, it might be thought, is exactly what Waltz already does, showing how the contrasted nature of hierarchical and anarchical realms – which he equates to Durkheim's 'solidary and mechanical societies' (Waltz, 1979, p. 116n) – explains the different patterns of social life at the domestic and international levels. Where is the reification in that?

The answer – picking up the second thread – lies buried in the very use of a comparative analysis here, as if national and international were equivalents as forms of society, such that they could be compared with each other in the way that individual societies (or types of societies) can. Actually, however, and quite unlike Durkheim's successive historical forms of 'mechanical' and 'solidary' society, domestic and international object domains are in a *contemporaneous* relation of *emergence*. 'The international' subtends upon some general feature of the social world – a relation that has no parallel in (and cannot therefore for be excavated via) the comparative contrast of mechanical and organic societies. The 'society' whose 'nature' must do the explaining here is thus in the first instance the one that comprehends them both as simultaneous, interrelated parts. And the first thing it must be called upon to explain is this *conjunction* of mechanical and solidary dimensions 'in the nature of society itself'. Otherwise, 'the geopolitical' will lack that 'substratum' (1938, p. 3) in society whose identification Durkheim believed was necessary for explaining 'social facts'.

This question of why 'the international' exists in the first place – why there are multiple societies – seems not to have formed a prominent part of either realist or non-realist theory.⁷ Realism, after all, works by reasoning *from* this fact, not towards it. ('Structures', says Waltz, 'emerge from the co-existence of states' (1979, p. 91) – initiating the analysis with the political multiplicity of societies already presupposed.) And non-realist theories have tended, in one way or another, to emphasize the historical variations in its form rather than its existence as a phenomenon in itself. Either way, however, the fact of it seems hereby to have been taken for granted. And yet it is only by posing this apparently childish question – why *are* there many societies? – that we can force ourselves to treat 'the international' as something other than an irreducible happenstance about the world. And it is only by answering it, as Durkheim would say, in reference to 'the nature of society', that we can properly constitute geopolitics as a *social* fact, and avoid it functioning instead as the reified obstacle to a social theory of 'the international'. But this, of course, Durkheim himself never did. Nowhere do we find him asking how the existence of geopolitics subtends on 'the nature of society itself'.⁸ And this is unsurprising, for his conception of the latter is as vacant of 'the international' and its consequences as is that of any other classical social theorist.

The result, however counter-intuitive, is ineluctable. Albeit on heuristic (and not ontological) grounds, neorealism proceeds via its own peculiar variant of



the 'domestic analogy': it likens the contrast of domestic and international realms to Durkheim's historical contrast of organic and mechanical types of society. Not only does this procedure itself separate them through counterposition, placing their interrelation beyond the analysis being constructed. Perhaps even more importantly, it is a counterposition of two ontologically singular conceptions of society. Unable, therefore, to focus on the relation of emergence between these two, neorealism deals in a conception of 'the international' to which sociological foundations cannot be imputed. And this also explains a further curiosity of Waltz's work: he nowhere provides an explicit ontology (or even definition) of 'the international'. He tells us what it is *like*, (Durkheim's 'mechanical society'), and how it is *organized*, (according to an anarchical principle), but not what it is.

'Reification', says Waltz, 'is often merely the loose use of language or the employment of metaphor to make one's prose more pleasing ...' (1979, p. 120). Loose language, however, can be tightened. The sense of a metaphor can be spelled out in ordinary language. But the reification of anarchy in realist thought submits to no such easy clarification. On the contrary, it turns 'the international' into an insoluble riddle, a sociological phenomenon that has taken on a life of its own and cannot any longer be reconnected to its own social foundations: 'I've thought about that a lot. I can't figure out how. Neither can anybody else so far' (1998, p. 380). In neorealism, it seems, the problem of ontological singularity has claimed one of its most illustrious, and certainly most unexpected, victims.

How then can this problem be overcome? Perhaps surprisingly, it cannot be done by simply adding on the additional premise of multiplicity – that societies always coexist with others – as Skocpol, Giddens and Mann have variously done. This merely repeats the unexplained presupposition we have already found in Carr and Waltz. And the addition is an external one, not derived from the nature of society itself.⁹ Indeed, it introduces causes over and above those derivable from the latter: it is once again the embryo of a separate theory. In this way, in terms of theoretical procedure, the most advanced works of historical sociology have in fact reproduced Waltz's own schema – one theory for domestic phenomena and a second, sourced separately, for international ones.

Thus, the impasse cannot be broken by further models of how domestic and international phenomena interact – indeed, as we have seen, Waltz has already allowed for an indefinite series of such models. Sooner or later, the problem must be tackled at its source: a conception of 'society' must be found in which 'the international' is an intelligibly *emergent* property; only then will international determinations no longer appear as supra-sociological (and extra-theoretical) phenomena, needing to be reintroduced *post hoc* into one's conception of the social world. And only then can international theory itself discover the ontological foundations of its subject matter, and end both its own reificatory tendencies and its long isolation from the wider social sciences.



And here lies the significance of the idea of ‘uneven and combined development’.

Even in its existing orthodox version (Leon Trotsky’s analysis of late Czarism), this idea builds ‘the international’ into a theory of social development. That is to say, it includes causal factors (identified below) that operate specifically through the circumstance of inter-societal multiplicity. But that existing version itself is pregnant with a much more foundational claim about the intrinsically uneven character of socio-historical development *per se*. ‘Unevenness’, says Trotsky, ‘is the most general law of the historic process’ (Trotsky, 1980, p. 5). This, it will be argued below, is the premise that is needed in order to overcome the problem of ontological singularity. For on the one hand, it finally identifies a feature of the overall ‘nature of society itself’, which explains the existence of the international as a ‘social fact’. And on the other hand, through its corollary of ‘combined development’, it redraws the sociology of ‘development’ in line with the consequences of that fact. From both directions, therefore, the separation of the domestic and the international is here pre-empted, producing a quite fundamental revision to social and international theory alike.

Does this enable the ‘long step [from neorealism’s ‘international-political theory’ (Waltz, 1979, p. 38)] towards a general theory of international relations’, the step that Waltz has never refused in principle, arguing only that ‘no one has shown how to take it’ (1990, p. 32)? Certainly, a key aspect of this revision is that the ‘object domain’ of the international is no longer delimited to the field of geopolitics. However, as we saw earlier, Waltz predicts that any such expansion must sacrifice theoretical determinacy. If we can show that it does not, then we will have satisfied the first of his three requirements for theory-building. And this is what we must now attempt.

Trotsky’s International Social Theory

The object domain

What, then, does it mean to assert a sociological premise of ‘universal unevenness’? First, it means that two empirical characteristics of human social development – multiplicity and difference – now reappear inside its *theoretical* definition: it is intrinsic to world development, viewed as a historical phenomenon, that it has always comprised a variety of (more or less interconnected) forms of society proceeding in different ways, at different levels, on different scales at different rates of change and so on. And second, adopting unevenness as a theoretical premise means asserting that this characteristic of social development is also *causally* significant for how the latter proceeds – to the extent that the interactive consequences of societal multiplicity must form part of any general theory of social development.



Here then is the fundamental break with ontological singularity. Unevenness, understood in this way, entails societal and hence geopolitical multiplicity.¹⁰ And that multiplicity in turn gives rise to an interactive dimension of development, radically overdetermining the internalist model inherited from classical social theory. However, it is not only the sociological inheritance that is affected here. Political multiplicity is the starting point for (neo)realism. Indeed, it is the *sine qua non* of any idea of 'the international'. Yet once the premise of unevenness is in place, this political multiplicity – anarchy in general – no longer appears as a circumstance arising beyond the conceptual reach of Sociology. For it is now visibly a dimension of social development, resulting from its uneven and combined nature. In this sense, the premise of universal unevenness renders the very existence of 'the international' *sociologically* intelligible – derivable, that is, from 'the nature of society itself'. U&CD is therefore the sociological formula of the international as a general abstraction. And its 'object domain', far from losing theoretical determinacy, is tightly delimited: it is 'that dimension of social reality which arises specifically from the co-existence within it of more than one society' (Rosenberg, 2006, p. 308).

Now, general abstractions – such as 'society', 'technology', 'production', 'development' – identify elemental characteristics of the social world. Their concrete referents differ hugely across time and space. But their existence in some form, as an ingredient of social reality, is common to all times and places.¹¹ Without them – as Marx recognized – comparative historical analysis would be impossible; and with it would go the means for analysing historically specific phenomena too. A major finding of the recent revival of World History studies is that any general abstraction of society, or social development, which did not specify it as multiple and interactive would be an abstraction that had excised an intrinsic and universal component of its real-world object. As Tenbruck has observed, (1994, p. 76), there might be legitimate occasions for doing this (for cleaving, that is, to a purely 'internalist' conception of society); however, the definition of social development *in general* (a shared ambition of most classical social theory) was surely never one of them. As we have already seen, the field of IR lives every day with the heavy consequences of this error: international theories that *must* dislocate themselves from social theory in order to make sense of their object of analysis; social theories that cannot comprehend 'the international' and which therefore generate reductionist analyses whenever they are applied to it. Defending the first of these consequences, Waltz protests that theory must involve radical simplification and must work by abstracting from most of reality. 'To achieve "closeness of fit"', he writes, 'would negate theory' (1990, p. 31). And again: 'Theory, after all, is mostly omissions'. Nevertheless, it matters *what* is omitted. The omission that generates the problem of ontological singularity is not one of descriptive detail, but rather of indispensable theoretical premises. It is the omission that more



than anything else explains why it has proven so difficult to unite ‘theories of internal and external politics’. How else can we account for the persistence of a separation for which we ‘can’t see any *logical* reason’?

The implication of all this appears deceptively obvious. It may seem truistic to say that anarchy is an emergent property *of* social development, rather than being an extraneous condition operating over and against it. But it is not trivial. For if we do not say it, and if we cannot explain how it is so, then we will have only ourselves to blame when these two later reappear as if they were indissolubly separate from each other.

On the other hand, with ontological singularity no longer tacitly framing the intellectual method, it should now be possible to mount a genuinely sociological interpretation of international phenomena, which is no longer reductionist. How far does Trotsky’s analysis of late nineteenth-century Russian development achieve this? In order to find out, three consecutive passes will now be made over Trotsky’s analysis. The first spells out the specifically international causes identified in his theory – causes that entail the reconceptualization of development itself, removing the element of ontological singularity. The second pass confirms that these international causes, far from warranting a non-sociological theory, in fact arise from and express a sociological property of historical development itself – its spatial and historical unevenness. And finally, the third pass clarifies the expanded object domain that this reconceptualization of the international defines – examining also its critical implications for the neorealist conception of anarchy.

What Trotsky needed to explain was why Czarist Russia, though undergoing the same process of industrialization which had earlier transformed the societies of Western Europe, was not coming to resemble them in terms of either the make-up of its internal class structure or (consequently) the direction of its political development. If Marx’s theory of capitalist society had general validity, and if capital’s tendency was to ‘create a world after its own image’ (Marx and Engels, 1973, p. 71), then how could it be that ‘England in her day revealed the future of France, considerably less of Germany, but not in the least of Russia and not of India’ (Trotsky, 1980, Vol. III, 378)? In answer, Trotsky invoked three irreducibly international causes.

First, a ‘whip of external necessity’ (in the form of Western military and developmental advances) had imposed upon the Czarist elite a geopolitical imperative to industrialize, or lose its external independence. In this way, Russian society was ‘compelled to follow after’ a course of development that had been initiated elsewhere (Trotsky, 1980, p. 4). As Marx had anticipated, capitalist industrialization was indeed spreading. But the mechanisms by which it was spreading were not only (or even mainly) those directly given within its own nature as a social process. In Russia, it neither ignited spontaneously nor arrived under its own steam. It was actively imported, funded, implemented



and controlled by a state organization responding to the geopolitical consequences of its development elsewhere. It might seem banal to say that, by definition, a 'whip of external necessity' presupposes multiple societies. Yet this same point becomes less banal when viewed from the angle of the presupposition itself. Turned around in this way, it entails that the multiplicity of societies *adds a causal dimension of its own* to the sociology of industrialization. And this first mechanism of 'combined development' – geopolitical pressure – is only one of several specifically international causes to which this dimension gives rise.

A second one, which Trotsky called 'the privilege of historic backwardness', immediately qualifies (and multiplies) the implications of the first. This second mechanism of inter-societal causality begins to explain why the outcome of responses to the 'whip of external necessity' is not (and cannot be) a retracing of the developmental sequences (scientific, economic and socio-political) whose results were now being emulated. It establishes the necessarily multilinear character of the historical process. Once again, the source of the mechanism is specifically the international coexistence of (differentially developed) societies. However, this time the mechanism itself is not a geopolitical pressure but rather the openings created by the asynchronicities of development among multiple societies. Specifically, the results of advanced development (technological, financial, organizational, ideological and so on) were available ready-made to latecomers, in ways they had not been for the pioneers, requiring no reinvention. This enormous advantage, especially when added to the geopolitical pressure, meant that the development of a latecomer society could 'make leaps', by comparison not only with what it would otherwise have been, but also with the earlier experience of its now more advanced predecessors. That is to say, as a direct result of asynchronous but interactive coexistence, latecomer societies would be 'skipping a whole series of intermediate steps' (Trotsky, 1980, p. 5), through which the original process of discovery had required the pioneer societies to pass. Viewed another way, this amounted to a compressing or 'drawing together of separate steps' (1980, p. 6). (And this compression was in fact the core of Trotsky's original definition of 'combined development'.)

And yet its outcome would be no straightforward acceleration of an ultimately unidirectional developmental process. Not only could the technical products of development unfold new possibilities when transferred from their original social setting into a new one,¹² but there was also a socio-political 'curse of [historic] backwardness' too. The 'whip of external necessity' meant that the pressure to industrialize would fall on backward societies irrespective of the nature and level of their prior development. And in those cases (the overwhelming majority), where that prior development did not already include the rise of a powerful capitalist class (which had been a central feature of the original English case), the directive role in industrialization would necessarily



fall instead to 'archaic' political groups – such as the Czarist elite. However, the ascendancy of these groups was rooted in the very social structures, which full-blown industrialization would dissolve. And here lies a third international mechanism affecting the spread of social processes from one society to another. This third mechanism is a compound of the other two (geopolitical pressure and the 'leaps' enabled by asynchronous development); however, it issues in a quite different class of effects, relating this time neither to the stimulus for development nor its accelerated speed but rather its ramifying social structure. And the significance of multilinearity, already posited in relation to both the inputs of social development and its inner mechanisms, is extended here into the analysis of the latter's results.

In an earlier age, says Trotsky, Peter the Great had deployed advanced military technology and bureaucratic models imported from the West to *reinforce* social structures (such as serfdom), which the West had already left behind, creating in the process a hybrid of Eastern and Western, advanced and 'backward' social formations. The same now applied to the process of industrialization. Because there was no indigenous capitalist class, the state had to undertake this process itself; however, that very substitution, though pursued as a form of emulation, itself radically differentiated the socio-political structure of latecomer industrialization from the much more liberal pattern of the original case. Furthermore, because the state itself remained rooted in, and dependent upon, the social structures of an agrarian society, it could not replicate the behaviour of the English capitalist landlords who, through Parliamentary enclosure Acts, had dissolved rural society to their own advantage. In Russia, industrialization had to reinforce the existing social structure of Czarism, else Czarism would not undertake it. It had to be produced as a resource for the state, and to coexist side by side with, and not threaten, other (preindustrial) resources.

The result was the peculiar combination of social structures that so baffled contemporary Marxist observers:¹³ a rapidly growing working class, empowered by concentration in huge, technologically advanced factories and radicalized by struggle against a repressive semi-feudal autocracy – but lacking a politically significant middle class to lead it in a struggle for liberalization; the creation of the fifth largest industrial sector in the world – in a society where 86 per cent of the population remained peasants, tied to the land in near subsistence conditions. In Russia, social actors whose English predecessors had been separated in time by the very course of development were now meeting directly and interacting (while others, partly as a result, were failing to materialize at all). A semi-feudal autocracy marched on beyond its own epoch and came face to face with an industrial working class. Socialist revolutionaries turned up in the wrong scene, surrounded by a predominantly peasant social formation. Capitalism was emerging, and yet the hour of the 'bourgeois revolution' was not approaching.



At the core of any theory, says Waltz, is a 'brilliant intuition', a 'creative idea' that captures 'a sense of the unobservable relations of things' (Waltz, 1979, p. 9). Trotsky's creative idea was to see that this apparently paradoxical outcome was not the anomaly it appeared to be. On the contrary, this was the mundane sociology of combined development, the consequence of capitalism's emergence within a politically and developmentally multiple socio-historical process.

As so often with this topic, the key point can be further clarified by considering its hypothetical obverse. In order to imagine the spread of capitalism creating 'a world in its own image', one would need in effect to postulate its spread as *even* (that is, homogenous) *because it was not combined* (that is, as if it simply took its own course in a series of different national settings without the results in any one case impacting upon the others). One would have to postulate the fact of multiplicity without the consequences of multiplicity, the existence of many societies without the resultant inter-societal dimension to the nature of those societies, geopolitically plural development without the causal fabric of 'the international'. In this fallacy – so obvious once uncovered – lies the whole problem of 'the international' for social theory. And in one sense, Trotsky's entire innovation – which also 'appears quite obvious once it is grasped' (Anderson, 1986, p. 19) – was simply to correct theoretically for the wild errors that resulted from such a postulate: 'This statement', he wrote of one of Marx's formulations, 'takes its cue from capitalist society conceived as a single type ...' (1980, pp. III, 378). (And 'Trotsky', Waltz has written, referring to this quotation, 'is exactly right' (Waltz, personal communication to the author).)

Thus, the solution to the theoretical puzzle of Russia's divergence lay in causal mechanisms inseparable from the international system. And Trotsky's idea interpolated these into a theory of capitalist development by reconceptualizing it as uneven (involving a staggered sequence of national industrial revolutions) and combined (in the triple sense of geopolitically interconnected, temporally compressed and sociologically hybridized).

But is this enough? We are seeking a sociological interpretation of international phenomena, not more demonstrations of the impact of international phenomena upon sociological ones. Such demonstrations leave us still in the realm of two theories. Moreover, in this case, the *causa causans* appears as a stubbornly *geopolitical* 'whip of external necessity', intruding upon a separately constituted pattern of *social* development. Indeed, all three causal mechanisms arise fundamentally from developments occurring *outside* the pattern of (Russian) social stratification we are trying to explain. 'The *international*' could hardly appear more external to the *sociological*.

That, however, is but a trick of the light. Watch what happens to this same scene as we now make a second pass over it. Once again we shall visualize it in



the context of Trotsky's idea. But this time, let us regard that idea as a *general* premise about social development (rather than an empirical observation about some circumstances that affected the historical spread of capitalist industrialization in particular). As suggested earlier, this means that we start with the assumption that *every* historical process materializes and unfolds within a concrete setting of uneven development, and we then actively seek out what additional causal dimensions this adds to the movement of the process itself. What happens? Suddenly, the external source of international phenomena is external no more – for it has no being apart from the universal unevenness of development itself. And the international phenomena themselves can therefore now appear as what they must actually be: a class of sociological causes arising specifically from the intrinsic unevenness of social development and expressed and refracted through its primary consequence: inter-societal multiplicity.

Thus, the geopolitical 'whip of external necessity', far from being a supra-sociological object, is itself a sociological cause. On the one hand, it arises from that unevenness in general that makes inter-societal multiplicity a normal characteristic of social reality. And on the other hand, it expresses (in this case) the concrete unevenness of historical development that synchronized the start of European industrialization with the climax of Russian absolutism. The 'privilege of historic backwardness' too is a *normal* feature of socio-historical development – once again, a product of the latter's unevenness, expressed specifically via the corollary of inter-societal multiplicity. (In Jacquetta Hawkes's account, its operation reaches back at least as far as the interconnected development of the very first civilizations in Sumer and Egypt (Hawkes, 1976, pp. 66–67)).

We seem, therefore, to have found a sociological interpretation of international phenomena (including geopolitical ones), which precisely does not seek to reduce them to a particular kind of society (for example capitalism) or social process (such as industrialization) *per se*. It identifies causal phenomena that are both visibly sociological in provenance (because they are attributed to the very nature of social development) and irreducibly international in their genesis and operation (because without a multiplicity of societies, they would not arise). Unlike all those Marxist, Liberal and even realist approaches, which Waltz criticized in *Theory of International Politics*, this premise enables a non-reductionist, sociological interpretation of 'the international'.

But now the plot thickens further and in a new direction. Earlier we saw Waltz, the premier critic of sociological approaches in IR, invoking the classical sociology of Durkheim and sliding into a 'domestic analogy' argument. Now we shall see that U&CD, though here used in critique of neorealism, ends by asserting an even greater significance for the latter's central concept – anarchy – than does neorealism itself.

Any such suggestion must at first seem implausible indeed. If we define 'the international' – as Waltz implicitly does – as the object domain of politics'



behaviour in relation to each other, then it seems at first impossible to rank the significance of anarchy any higher: from it follows, as he has so compellingly shown, the entire complex of structural determinations that form its 'mechanical' character, which in turn contrasts so starkly to the 'solidary' nature of domestic society. But this definition of the object domain is exactly the problem. It restricts his theory to one side of an inside–outside division, obscuring the causal significance of anarchy for the social world as a whole. A different definition of the object domain might reveal consequences of anarchy extending beyond the direct relations of politics. If these consequences proved important, we would have a warrant for saying that realism underestimated the significance of anarchy. Perhaps in other words, the true measure of anarchy is not how completely it dominates the horizon of geopolitics alone, but rather what is the scale of its significance for the social world as a whole. To gauge that, however, one would need, at least momentarily, to switch procedures from analysing it as a distinct, contrasted form of sociation ('mechanical' as opposed to 'solidary'); one would need instead to picture how it articulates with the rest of the social world from which neorealism separates it analytically.

In order to produce this picture, let us make one last pass over Trotsky's analysis of Russia. As we know, the pattern of late Czarist combined development did eventually result in the 'revolution of backwardness', which Trotsky had predicted. And few would contest that the Bolshevik Revolution was an event of considerable consequence for the sociology as well as the geopolitics of twentieth-century world history. And yet to what, if not to anarchy, did Trotsky attribute the production of this phenomenon? It was after all anarchy (as the existence of politically multiple entities) that had allowed for the historical proliferation of paths and temporalities of socio-cultural development, such that English industrialization coincided with post-feudal remnants in Europe, ancient empires in the Middle East and Asia, and scatterings of chiefdoms, kingdoms, city-states, tribal societies, nomadic pastoralist bands and even hunter-gatherer communities across the major land masses of the world. It was anarchy too (now viewed as the geopolitical coexistence of these societies), which entailed that the inequalities of development and power resulting from this pattern of variation could produce developmental opportunities and pressures – not just the 'whip of external necessity' but also 'the privilege [and the 'curse'] of historic backwardness'. And it was finally anarchy (now additionally expressed as the independent decision making authority of elites entrenched in existing forms of society) that ensured that the transmission of social and technological elements between societies produced innovative fusions, rather than sociological photocopies of the originating developmental process. All of these 'anarchical' mechanisms of socio-historical change operated powerfully in the Russian case. Indeed, without them, there would arguably have been no Bolshevik Revolution, no Stalinism, perhaps no fascism and certainly no Cold War as we knew it.



Of course, Trotsky did not use this language (of ‘anarchy’). And even in the present adaptation of his idea, anarchy is not a free-standing *explanans*: it is an emergent phenomenon in and through which the consequences of unevenness are expressed. Nevertheless, if there is any cogency to this line of thinking, then two conclusions must follow. First, anarchy is a basic and systemic ingredient of social development – despite the fact that it is normally counterposed to it. And second, when we view it in this way, we can see that anarchy is responsible for a dialectical, inter-societal dimension to the mechanisms of historical change. This dimension is as real as any of Durkheim’s ‘social facts’, but it is inaccessible to unilinear (ontologically singular) theories of social development. And it will not appear either in any international theory of anarchy which is built upon a counterposition of geopolitical and sociological object domains. For it comprises a class of social facts that traverse the two.

Critiques of neorealism have often argued that it overstates the significance of anarchy (for example Milner, 1991). The present argument points in the opposite direction. If anything, neorealism radically underspecifies anarchy – because it misses a series of identifiable causal mechanisms that follow just as logically from it as does the balance of power. And it further underestimates it – because those consequences reach wider and deeper into the world of social facts than any purely geopolitical theory can visualize. By contrast, Trotsky’s idea traces out both those consequences and the specifically inter-societal mechanisms producing them. And its ability to do so arises from its foundational redefinition of the object domain of the international.

Structures

Consequences, however, are not by themselves enough. The aspiration of theory reaches beyond case-by-case explanations. It searches for wider patterns in the accumulation of empirical cases. It seeks evidence, that is, for the existence of structures whose operation it tries to render visible and intelligible.

So, does the idea of ‘U&CD’ enable an extension of strictly international theory beyond the analysis of geopolitical structure? Or does it – as Waltz has so often said of his critics’ proposals – merely add empirical descriptions that increasingly blur the gains of theory?

Faced with this question, it is useful to recall Waltz’s own discussion of the difference between ‘neorealist theory’ and the pre-existing field of ‘realist thought’, whose mental object neorealism so dramatically revisualized (Waltz, 1990). Like neorealism, Trotsky’s idea illuminates an object domain that has already been visited by other thinkers. Many of these have had brilliant insights about its parts. Indeed, it will be suggested below that their insights have revealed the existence of further strictly international social structures



beyond that of geopolitical anarchy. And yet they have fallen short of theorizing these. Still, so important is their achievement – enabling us, in effect, to conduct the second step of Waltz's procedure of theory construction – that we must pause to lay out an example. And an ideal candidate is Alexander Gerschenkron's remarkable work on *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*. What, then, did Gerschenkron see? And what did he not?

Gerschenkron sought to explain the variety of outcomes that the single historical process of industrialization had generated as it spread across Europe during the long nineteenth century. And he did this via a model designed 'to systematize the deviations from the English paradigm by relying on the degree of backwardness as the organizing concept' (Gerschenkron, 1962, p. 360). As the industrial revolution repeated itself across space and time, the developmental gap between its pioneers and new cohorts of entrants widened. And this, he argued, had law-like consequences for how the experience of latecomers differed from that of the societies they were emulating.

Three of these in particular defined the shape of his model. First, the longer industrialization was delayed, the wider was the developmental gap; hence, the greater were the windfall gains to be reaped by introducing advanced technologies from elsewhere; and hence also the greater were the possibilities of accelerating the process. Thus, late industrialization, by reason of its lateness, tended to be rapid. Second, the more severe the degree of initial backwardness, the less possible it was to replicate the *social* conditions that promoted the first industrial revolution, and hence the greater was the need for alternative institutions (banks, state authorities and so on) to substitute their own financial and coercive agency. Thus, late industrialization, again by virtue of its lateness, exhibited a markedly different political economy. And finally, the quicker and more disruptive the process of change, and the more it diverged institutionally from the original cases, the greater was its need to be legitimized by statist, collectivist ideologies. Late industrialization, though sparked by liberal example, was thus unlikely to be liberal. Using this model, sharply differentiated experiences of industrialization – from the 'classic case' of England, through the already very different examples of France and Germany, and all the way to the contrasting extreme of the Soviet Union – could be resolved into 'an orderly system of graduated deviations' (1962, p. 44) from the original (English) instance, broadly governed by the single variable of distribution in time.

The similarities with Trotsky's analysis of 'combined development' are obvious – so obvious that one might be forgiven for suspecting Gerschenkron of a monumental act of plagiarism.¹⁴ But Gerschenkron imparted a social scientific rigour to ideas that Trotsky had expressed rather impressionistically. And he did so in a way that helps us meet the requirement of Waltz's second step in theory construction: after one has delimited an object domain, one must



next find behavioural regularities operating across it, which signal the existence of social structures (which can then, in step three, become the object of a theory). And this, surely, Gerschenkron did.

Gerschenkron's work identifies the systematic effects of a structure that stretches across the expanded object domain of our redefinition of 'the international'. He observes a pattern in the (domestic) social structural differentiation of successive industrial revolutions. And he correlates this qualitative differentiation broadly to the size of the (international) developmental gap between the societies involved, a gap that (because the first comers continue to advance after their initial industrialization) is significantly governed by the linear, quantitative variable of historical timing. Now, we shall find occasion in a moment to criticize the limitations of Gerschenkron's approach; first, however, we need to register the basic point that can be drawn from it.

It is perhaps obvious that the causal factors through which this differentiation operates are inseparable from 'the co-existence ... of more than one society'. 'Backwardness, of course', says Gerschenkron himself, almost making the point, 'is a relative term. It presupposes the existence of more advanced countries' (1962, p. 42). Yet, within these obvious points, a much less obvious one seems also to be contained: namely, that 'the co-existence ... of more than one society' is itself here imparting to industrialization (but the mechanism applies much more widely) a dialectical, inter-societal dimension that significantly and intelligibly inflects its overall movement. It is this dimension that explains why the European spread of industrialization necessarily produced not many Englands but differentiated French, German and Russian experiences, whose differences nonetheless made up a recognizable pattern. And if that is the case, then the result we need for step two is already here: Gerschenkron's work shows that anarchy generates a developmental structure as well as a geopolitical one.

Why then (for the purpose of step three) will we not simply take this argument for the theory that we need? Gerschenkron's idea is certainly 'a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity' (the political economy of industrialization). And '[b]y simplification, [it] lay[s] bare the essential elements in play and indicate[s] necessary relations of cause and interdependency ...' (Waltz, 1979, p. 10) – well, some of them anyway. The ones that are missing, however, correspond almost exactly to the shortfall in classical realism that Waltz's own theory sought to overcome.

In order to characterize that shortfall, Waltz borrows from Joseph Schumpeter a description of pre-classical economics. William Petty, said Schumpeter, created 'for himself theoretical tools with which he tried to force a way through the undergrowth of facts' (cited in Waltz, 1990, p. 23). All manner of localized empirical conjectures could be formulated in this way. What was lacking was a conceptualization of the economy as a whole and in itself, of the kind that



Waltz says the Physiocrats finally provided. Only then would it become possible not simply to draw together these varied speculations about the unit-level interactions of the parts but also to paint in the entire class of system-level determinations to which the latter gave rise. An equivalent leap, he adds, or rather the failure to take it, is what distinguishes realist *thought* from neorealist *theory*.

Now, something similar seems to apply to Gerschenkron. Gerschenkron's analysis was genuinely insightful, rigorous and productive. And yet there was, for all that, something 'pre-Physiocratic' about it. Although many of the causal links entailed in his model were implicitly interactive, the explicit register of the model remained comparative. Obviously, this was not because Gerschenkron underestimated the *empirical* significance of the real-world interconnections involved.¹⁵ However, the interactive coexistence of multiple societies did not enter the theoretical model itself, which mainly comprised strictly economic mechanisms, together with the accompanying political and ideological exigencies to which a society industrializing by this route would be subject. And hence, although even the 'organizing concept' (1962, p. 360) of the whole approach – 'backwardness' – was clearly a relational (international) one, the causal mechanisms that it uncovered also remained focussed on explaining *national* outcomes: different degrees of backwardness produced different political economies of industrialization.

The consequence of this is that Gerschenkron's conceptualization of industrialization remained coextensive with his accumulating analyses of its national parts – 'successive explorations', he called them (1962, p. 2) – at no point making the leap to a re-theorization of its overall movement as a global historical process. Such a leap would have forced a theoretical reckoning with that enormous, but purely empirical, premise of Gerschenkron's argument: namely, the context of an international system in which the very coexistence of multiple societies (and not just their unequal development) has systematic causal implications for the course of any process occurring across them. In Gerschenkron's model, the consequences of developmental inequality were formally theorized, whereas those of societal multiplicity, though they operated within the same phenomena being analysed, were not. And yet, of course, the developmental inequality between, say, eighteenth-century England and France is something more than, say, that between Manchester and York writ large. Whatever they share in terms of economic theory is, in the first case, supplemented by geosocial and geopolitical dynamics quite absent in the second. In this respect, then, Gerschenkron had forged 'for himself theoretical tools with which he tried to force a way through the undergrowth of facts'. And good tools they were too, but not quite good enough. They did not, in the end, trigger that (re)conceptualizing of the phenomenon of socio-historical development as a whole and in itself, which his analysis so strongly implied.



To have done so, it would have been necessary for him, in Waltz's terms, to separate out the structural characteristics of 'the international' itself. And that, (even on an expanded definition of the international), cannot be done using the unit-level attribute of 'backwardness' as one's 'organizing concept'. One would need rather to focus upon the structural attribute of the system, which finds expression in the phenomenon of backwardness among some of the parts. One would need, that is, the *theoretical* concept of 'unevenness'.¹⁶

The utility of Gerschenkron's work for our purpose here is thus necessarily limited. It would be hard to imagine a clearer and more concrete demonstration of the existence of additional international structures to the geopolitical one analysed by Waltz. And yet, Gerschenkron builds his model around the *effects* of this structure (theorizing some but leaving others simply pre-supposed) without fully conceptualizing the structure itself. Something more will therefore be needed if we are now to take the third and final step in Waltz's method of theory construction: provision of the explanatory theory itself. And because we have already several times made the case for this step (that is, proposing U&CD as a theory of 'the international') in the abstract, it may help to rehearse it now in relation to a particular historical event.

Theory: 1914 in the history of U&CD

The debate on the causes of the First World War has, like so many others, replicated in the field of historiography that basic separation between 'social' and 'international' factors that we are attempting to overcome. (For useful recent surveys, see Berghahn (1993), Seligmann and McLean (2000), Mombauer (2002), Hamilton and Herwig (2004), Joll and Martel (2007).) Writers have gravitated towards either a unit-level pole (where the contradictions of German social development are held to explain the belligerence of the *Kaiserreich* and, with it, the outbreak of the war) or a system-level pole (where the structure of European geopolitics in 1914 explains the increasing difficulty of peaceful crisis management). Over the years, the debate has swung back and forth between these two: the damning verdict of Versailles was replaced by the 1950s with a 'comfortable consensus' (of shared responsibility); this consensus was then violently overthrown by the work of Fritz Fischer (1967) and his followers, which has in turn lost ground to a resurgence of internationally oriented approaches (for example Schöllgen, 1990).

Waltz himself has contributed to the debate, using neorealist theory to explore, *inter alia*, the generic instability of internally balanced coalitions (Waltz, 1988). He does not hold this instability to have been *the* cause of the war. Rather, it is the aspect of the war's causation that, being the result of a particular structure of international politics, can be the object of an international

theory. Much more than this went into the actual production of the conflict, but to pursue that would carry us beyond the realm of theory and into that of concrete explanation. And yet it is just here, on this question of how far (international) theory can reach into historical explanation, that we might now take a stand.

For theory has of course also been attempted on the other, 'social', side of the debate. At least one writer, the diplomatic historian Michael Gordon (1974), decided quite early on that the Fischer thesis, and behind it the entire *Sonderweg* literature on German development, needed to be placed on a firmer and clearer theoretical footing, so that its presuppositions and logical coherence could be tested and strengthened. And the theoretical framework that he chose for this exercise was – lo and behold – Alexander Gerschenkron's model of economic backwardness.

Specifically, Gordon sought to explain the contrasted behaviour of the British and German states, before and during the July Crisis of 1914, by reference to their different locations in Gerschenkron's schema. Britain, he argued, was the classic case of a society that had moved both early and (hence) gradually in acquiring the attributes of a modern nation state in four key areas: economic development, national community, governmental institutions and political participation. Germany, by contrast, exemplified the opposite: late, and consequently rapid, development. And by drawing out the disruptive impact of this accelerated change in all four areas, Gordon identified a series of 'spillover mechanisms' by which the peculiar tensions of late development found expression in an aggressive and counterproductive foreign policy. By 1914, he argued, Imperial Germany's autocratic elite felt itself doubly encircled: internally by the rise of new political forces created by industrialization, forces that its policies of repression and demagoguery had failed to deflect; and externally by a 'nightmare of coalitions' largely produced by the international consequences – whether deliberate, miscalculated or unintended – of its struggle with domestic social change. And it was this, he concluded, that explains why it was Germany (rather than Britain, whose external position was, if anything, much more obviously in relative decline), which opted for a showdown in the July Crisis.

Now this might be taken for a return to reductionism, an inside-out form of argument that could well contribute to historical *explanation*, but whose subject matter is quite external to international *theory*. And it is true that Gordon does largely proceed via a comparative, rather than interactive, analysis. But this, as suggested earlier, is a limitation of Gerschenkron's approach that is not given in the object of that approach. On the contrary, the historically staggered and socially differentiated experiences of industrialization that compose the Anglo-German comparison were outcomes of an international structure (the dialectical structure of socio-historical development) generated by anarchy. The existence of a structure of this kind follows as logically from the



circumstance of anarchy as does the existence of that geopolitical structure analysed by neorealism. Anarchy then, it turns out, spreads its causal implications invisibly but powerfully into the 'social' side of the debate as well as the 'geopolitical' one.

Therefore, the question arises: if *both* sets of phenomena (geopolitical and developmental) are bound up with specifically international structures of the social world, then why can we not have a single international theory that can make sense of both of them – rather than being condemned to drift back again when the current post-Fischerite tide recedes in its turn? That recession will surely come because neither side of the debate can really be said on its own to 'lay bare the essential elements in play and indicate necessary relations of cause and interdependency' (Waltz, 1979, p. 10). Neither is able to picture July 1914 in a way that does not exclude elements (theorized by the other), which are simply too significant to leave outside the theorization itself. David Calleo's rejection of any significant role for German domestic politics in the outbreak of the war (Calleo, 1978, pp. 29, 59, 76) seems as problematic as Hans Ulrich Wehler's near denial of the very existence of specifically geopolitical logics (Wehler, 1985, pp. 183–184). Clearly, this impasse is a theoretical one. If we could find a single idea that would not just explain both sets of law-like phenomena separately but also picture them in terms of the 'necessary relations of cause and interdependency' of a larger whole, or structure, then we would have the beginnings of that fuller international theory that Waltz has often said 'would be a lot better than a simple theory of international politics', if only someone could work out *how to do it* (1998, pp. 379–380).

How then would we apply the idea of U&CD to the debate over the First World War? If we follow Trotsky's method, we must begin by identifying the most significant structure of uneven development at work in producing the Europe of 1914. We must then trace the particular combinations and contradictory fusions of social forms to which this unevenness had given rise. And finally, we must follow the threads of causality produced by this process to the point where they connect to the proximate causes of the war.

Applying this method, we shall find, first, that the century leading up to the War was heavily shaped by the historical unevenness of capitalist industrialization as a global process. Indeed, this unevenness underlay three of the most significant system-level phenomena of the period: the rise and decline of great powers; the Great Depression of 1873–1896, which so darkened relations between those powers; and the patterns of alliance formation among them that otherwise seem to confound any sociological explanation. Second, we shall also find that the (unit-level) internal history of Germany in this period was quite fundamentally shaped by processes that correspond to the key elements of Trotsky's 'combined development': state formation under a 'whip of external necessity'; a contradictory fusion of old with new political forms;



and a marked divergence of German industrial and political development away from the original English model, partly via the effects of interaction with that model ('the privilege of historic backwardness'). And finally, when we follow the subsequent development of this social formation in its interactions with the world around it, we will find that the proximate causes of the War – which are in fact overwhelmingly dominated by German fears and ambitions – arise organically within the process of U&CD we have been reconstructing.

As we shall see, not every factor can be straightforwardly pigeon-holed in this way (for example, as an expression of combination rather than unevenness). However, the importance of the exercise can hardly be overstated: if Trotsky's idea cannot be used in this basic heuristic sense – to assemble the elements of historical explanation in a distinctive way – then the claims we have made for it must fail. On the other hand, if it can be so used, and if unevenness and combination do turn out to be key to the explanation, then the last of Waltz's criteria for an international theory will have been met. Let us take up the challenge.

Uneven

As Sydney Pollard once observed, the historical process of industrialization

had to begin somewhere, with one or two sectors, and then spread so that at any one time some regions would be changed and others would lag behind No history that sets out to describe realistically how Europe was industrialised can leave out this manner in which the process occurred, and the interrelationships which it set up as it proceeded. (1981, pp. 32, 46)

As a result of this unavoidable unevenness, a chain of interconnected industrial revolutions, staggered in space and time, stretched across northern Europe's long nineteenth century. Germany's, the most dramatic of these in weight and speed, was underway by the 1850s, and was thus placed (both in geographical space and in historical time) between those of Britain and France in the West, which it was emulating, and that of Russia in the East, by which it soon seemed destined to be overshadowed.

On a global scale, the geopolitical consequences of this unevenness of industrialization were – and have continued to be – enormous. During the nineteenth century, the sudden steepening of developmental difference that it produced between European and non-European societies, led rapidly to an unprecedented subordination of almost the whole world to the industrializing states of Europe and its offshoots.¹⁷ Not till two centuries later, with the delayed arrival of large-scale industrialization in Asia, itself a further reflection of historical unevenness, would this geographical lopsidedness of world



development start to be decisively reduced, with correspondingly enormous consequences for international affairs today: as a result of the delayed Asian take-off, America's post-Cold War 'unipolar moment' proved momentary indeed. In both cases therefore – the nineteenth century and the twenty-first – the spatio-temporal unevenness of industrialization defined both the overall shape and the dynamic processes of world politics.

Crucially for our purposes, however, this two-century long unbalancing and rebalancing of world development was first played out in miniature within nineteenth-century Europe itself. There too, it gave rise to the major geopolitical shifts of the period. As Eric Hobsbawm put it, the fact that industrialization began in Britain (and not everywhere simultaneously) meant that 'this country ... temporarily rose to a position of global influence and power unparalleled by any state of its relative size before or since ...' (Hobsbawm, 1969, p. 13). Meanwhile, German industrialization and unification suddenly reversed a situation in which 'for more than three hundred years the powers of the circumference – France on the one side, Sweden and later Russia on the other – had laid down the law to central Europe' (Taylor, 1945, pp. 106–107). And its historical timing – once again an expression of the wider unevenness of historical development – entailed that, on arrival as a great power, Germany would find the major opportunities for expansion, (Continental or colonial), already closed off by earlier processes of state formation and imperialism (Calleo, 1978).¹⁸ Thus, unlike its predecessors, the German attempt to pursue a *Weltpolitik* (from 1897 onwards) could proceed only at the expense of other, more established rivals. Russia, on the other hand, which had begun the nineteenth century as the greatest of the Continental land powers, did not begin to reform and pursue an industrial policy until defeat in the Crimean War of 1854–1856 exposed the disastrous extent of its relative decline. However, once Russian industrialization gathered speed (from the 1890s onwards), it loomed as the largest threat to the 'latent hegemony' of Germany in Europe. At the same time, far to the West, an even greater reversal was in preparation, as the growth of American industry began to dwarf the scale of its European counterparts (Lowe, 1994, p. 22) – a development whose delayed geopolitical consequences would be suddenly and decisively activated in 1917.

Finally, as industrialization spread to these and other countries, Britain's original lead was bound to be eroded, bringing her world position under strain and forcing a geopolitical adjustment to the increasingly multipolar distribution of power – as indeed occurred first in the alliance with Japan (1902) and then in the Ententes of 1904 and 1907 with her two greatest imperial rivals, France and Russia. Between 1880 and 1913, Britain's relative decline was reflected in a fall of its share in world industrial production from 23.2 per cent to 13.6 per cent, whereas the shares of Germany and the United States rose to 15 per cent and 32 per cent respectively (Lowe, 1994, p. 6). The decline was not only because of the appearance of other industrializing powers where none had



previously existed, but also because of the ability of these newcomers to take advantage of the rise of new industries, while Britain was, relatively speaking, held back by the scale of its investment in earlier stages of the process (Kemp, 1985, p. 168ff). Thus, the 'privilege of historic backwardness' had found a delayed corollary, revealed over time, in a penalty of historical priority. Britain was now, as Trotsky put it, 'paying-up for the past when England played too long the role of capitalist pathfinder' (Trotsky, 1980, p. 5).

For realist writers such as David Calleo (1978), Dale Copeland (2000) and John Mearsheimer (2001), the ultimate cause of the War lies in the geopolitical situation produced by this sequence: Germany, having rapidly become the strongest continental state, confronted an imminent relative decline because of the accelerating rise of Russia behind it, and sought to pre-empt that decline before it was too late. That this geopolitical predicament was a central ingredient of the German decision for war in 1914 seems undeniable (Seligmann and McLean, 2000, pp. 144, 147, Calleo, pp. 40–41). Yet the warrant this could provide for a 'purely systemic' (Copeland, p. 78) explanation for the war is ambiguous at best: after all, this was a predicament generated above all by Germany's intermediate spatio-temporal location in a process of social change (the process of European industrialization).

But the geopolitical rise and decline of powers was by no means the only way in which the unevenness of industrialization played into the international origins of the War. Long before its immediate causes had appeared, European international relations – indeed European socio-political development more generally – had undergone a profound change. The Great Depression of 1873–1896 had prompted a widespread abandonment of free trade (Britain excepted). This switch to mercantilist policy led to a re-politicizing of international economic relationships, a heightening of diplomatic tensions due to frequent trade wars and an intensification of imperial rivalries too (Pollard, 1981, pp. 261–262; Hobsbawm, 1987, p. 317ff.).

Moreover, within Germany, the Great Depression also produced a political effect of enormous significance. It brought together the previously opposed interests of Junker agriculture and heavy industry around tariff protection, creating a parliamentary 'marriage of iron and rye', which dominated German politics right down to the eve of the War. And Germany's resultant abandonment of free trade in 1879 thus not only set in train a spread of protectionism and a rise in international tensions. It also established a reactionary political alliance that, as we shall see, is central to unit-level explanations of Germany's decision for war in 1914.

In both internationally and domestically oriented accounts, the Great Depression thus figures as a major long-term cause of the War. And yet in neither account is this element of the explanation grasped theoretically. In the works of Calleo, Hobsbawm, Gerschenkron and Wehler alike, it is treated as



an external empirical variable, rather than something that arises from the logic of process that is being invoked to explain the war. But this curious limitation – in effect, a shared disjuncture between theory and history at the core of the debate – is not a necessary one. For, as shown by the seminal work of Philip Bairoch (1989), the Great Depression was itself produced by the uneven and combined nature of industrialization as a historical process. How?

Between 1860 and 1871, a wave of commercial deregulation had swept across Continental Europe, as the major states, confronted by an ever-widening British trade advantage, became ‘conscious of [their] backwardness’ (p. 14) and switched from protectionist resistance to emulation of British free trade. This process reached its climax in 1871 when the founding of the *Kaiserreich* extended Prussia’s already liberal trade regime to the other German states. Thus, the historical unevenness of industrialization had produced an international pressure – a whip of external necessity¹⁹ – which led to the trade policy of the state most advanced in the process becoming generalized to (and combining with the local conditions of) numerous other states at very different levels of development.

By this point, however, Europe was no longer the only theatre in which capitalist industrialization was underway. And in the United States, because the ongoing expansion of prairie settlement and cultivation coincided with the availability of new technologies in production and transport, things were not happening ‘in the same order’ (Trotsky, 1980, p. 5). Agriculture, not manufacturing, would be the first sector in which American productivity gains due to industrialization would have an impact on the Old World. By 1872–1881, annual grain exports to Europe were running at 2.14 million tons – up from a mere 50,000 tons 25 years earlier (Bairoch, 1989, p. 25). Moreover, the intensity of the resultant ‘grain shocks’ was temporarily magnified by the re-sequencing of American industrialization: eventually, towards the end of the century, urban industrialization would create sufficient demand to absorb more and more of US grain production domestically, reducing its outward flow (Gerschenkron, p. 78; Trebilcock, p. 86); however, for two decades, the tide ran at full flood, threatening to wash away the foundations of European agriculture. And the slowdown in the growth of GNP at the core of the Great Depression ‘was mostly the result of a decline in the growth rate of agricultural production’, which in turn ‘can be almost completely explained by the influx of overseas grain’ (Bairoch, p. 46, see also Pollard, p. 254).

The immediate result for Germany was that the Junkers lost their London market and were rapidly converted from free trade to tariff protection, creating the conditions in 1879 for the ‘marriage of iron and rye’. For Alexander Gerschenkron, comparing this outcome with Britain’s continued adherence to free trade, 1879 was a dark moment: the Great Depression, he believed, was Germany’s ‘golden opportunity’ (Gerschenkron, 1943/1966, p. 67) to rid itself



of the anti-democratic burden of Junker influence by allowing its agricultural sector to contract – as Britain was doing (and had been doing since 1846). Indeed, for Gerschenkron, Germany's failure to seize this opportunity and to remove the Junker obstruction of liberal development became over time the single greatest cause of the war.

Why then did Germany not follow Britain's example of 1846? Why did it instead lead most of Continental Europe back to protectionism, opening a new era of domestic reaction and heightened international tensions? The answer, according to Bairoch, is found in 'the different stages of economic development' (1989, p. 48) at which these societies stood when the 'grain invasion' (O'Rourke, 1997) began. In Britain, the agricultural population had already (in 1846) fallen to a mere 22 per cent of the whole. As late as 1862, meanwhile, the corresponding figures for Germany and the Continent overall were still two and three times as high, respectively. Thus, for the Continent to have achieved (by the 1870s) an equivalent position to that of Britain in 1846, labour would have had to transfer into industry 'at a rate at least twice as fast as in Great Britain, and at a time when foreign markets clearly could not play the same role as for Great Britain because of the latter's established economic lead' (Bairoch, 1989, p. 48).

Thus, Gerschenkron's notion that Germany should in 1879 have replicated Britain's behaviour in 1846, using the pressure of foreign agricultural competition to hasten its own transition to an industrial society, is based on a false analogy. Owing to its historical priority in the process of industrialization, Britain had already proceeded much further in this transition when it abolished the Corn Laws. For the same reason of historical timing, the consequences of doing so were far less dangerous, for at that earlier point in the global process of development, the extreme cost pressures (and absolute volumes) of American and Russian wheat exports had yet to materialize.

To visualize the actual process that gave rise to the Great Depression, we therefore have to add in a second, Atlantic plane of uneven development intersecting with the first, which had been produced by Britain's interaction with European societies. Through this second vector, the different temporality and sequencing of New World industrialization reacted back on the Old World pattern of development of which it was itself an earlier offshoot, critically overdetermining its further evolution. And in this way, the theoretical anomaly noted earlier (in which a key element of the explanation for the War arises outside the explanatory logic of process) can be overcome using Trotsky's idea. For like the geopolitical upheavals referred to earlier, the Great Depression arose from the fact that global industrialization was both uneven (taking off at different times in different places) and combined (in the sense that the differential elements thus produced continued to interact with and had an impact on each other). A single idea is able to 'indicate necessary relations of cause and



interdependency' (Waltz, 1979, pp. 9–10) in two object domains – geopolitics and economic development – which Waltz treated as separate because 'no one has shown how' to combine them theoretically.

So far we have seen examples of how the historical unevenness of development affected both the shifting distribution of power among the major states and also their changing trade policies. Can it also help explain alterations in the alignment among them? In the present case, a crucial example appears to be Russia's transformation from Prussia's ally in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars into the ally of Republican France by 1894. The example is crucial for three main reasons. First, the German–Russian relationship was central to German actions in the July Crisis of 1914. Second, the (Franco-Russian) alliance of regime-type opposites appears at first to resist any sociologically grounded explanation. If Bismarck 'cynically cultivated [a] popular hatred of Britain' (Calleo, 1978, p. 23) because he feared the liberalizing consequences of too cordial a relationship, how could Czarist Russia move so easily into a full military alliance with its erstwhile political nemesis, Republican France? And third, Bismarck, fearing a 'nightmare of coalitions', had made the prevention of Russia's wandering in this way into a central plank of his diplomatic 'system'. Yet, several of the key steps in this realignment occurred during his own Chancellorship. How then is this to be explained?

Located much further along the spatio-temporal gradient of European development, Russian attempts to industrialize began only after the German 'take-off' was well underway, and from a much lower starting point. Whereas Bismarck's challenge had been to foster (and control the effects of) a process that had already ignited, Russian governments were now attempting to initiate that process where it had not previously existed. And – again, unlike Germany – the state was substituting for the lack of domestic capital by contracting large foreign loans, paid for by increased exports of grain. However, this comparative differentiation did not prevent the two cases from interacting with each other. In 1879, German agricultural tariffs hit the second element of Russia's industrialization strategy (grain exports) and became an enduring source of friction between the two states thereafter. And when Bismarck sought, in 1887, to control Russia's negative reaction by banning the trading of Russian securities on the Berlin stock exchange, he struck at the first element too (foreign loans). Here the contradictory shape of German policy – attempting to increase its manufactured exports while restricting its agricultural imports – became most evident. And the immediate result of Bismarck's action was a wholesale transfer of Russian securities from Berlin to Paris, laying the foundations of a financial relationship, which would mature into the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894.

However, there is an even wider dimension, beyond the immediate actions of the two states, to the role of U&CD in sealing this realignment. The speed of Germany's industrialization had produced a 'permanent shortage of capital'



(Borchardt, 1973, p. 142; Joll and Martel, 2007, p. 194) such that successive Chancellors chafed at the relative weakness of the financial arm of their diplomacy. By contrast, France's slower growth and higher savings rate, conditioned in part by the securing of peasant property in the French revolution and its aftermath, yielded much greater amounts of capital for foreign investment (twice as much as Germany by 1914 – and that for an economy only half the size (Lowe, 1994, p. 17; Joll and Martel, 2007, p. 194). Therefore, in this period, Russian dependence on foreign capital, German shortages and French financial strength were all related to the timing and manner of their industrialization. In comparative terms, these cases were separated and distinguished from each other by their different locations in the temporal sequence of national processes of industrialization. However, in real historical time, the three societies coexisted and interacted throughout, and hence the sequence-induced differences between them played a role in bringing about the realignment among them. Historical unevenness thus played directly into the concrete causes of their shifting geopolitical orientations.

Combined

If the unevenness of industrialization shaped the (system-level) geopolitical and economic pressures of nineteenth-century Europe, what were the key patterns of (unit-level) combined development to which these processes gave rise? At this point, if our interest is the causes of the War, we must focus – in line with the historical literature – on the particular case of Germany. There are two main reasons for this. First, no other country played such a central role in both the long-term and the short-term causes of the World War. As Thorstein Veblen put it, soon after the outbreak of the fighting:

Had there been no Imperial Germany included in the concert of nations the outcome might not have been substantially different in the long run, so far as regards Europe's eventual fortunes in respect of peace and war; but with Germany included there has been no room to doubt that, whenever this prospective war should break out, Germany would be the seat of the disturbance, whether on the offensive or defensive. (Veblen, 1915, p. 259)

And second, when we ask why this should have been so, we cannot help but notice that the history of Germany in the nineteenth century is a near-classic inventory of the elements of Trotsky's 'combined development'. Compelled by a 'whip of external necessity', a pre-capitalist political elite attempted to incorporate aspects of modernizing development into its own strategy of self-preservation. The result was a sociologically unique hybrid of the old and the



new, characterized on the one hand by accelerated material development (enabled by the 'privilege of historic backwardness'), and on the other by retarded political change (because of the use of imported elements to reinvigorate an archaic political class). Thus, in Germany, industrialization would, for reasons of its timing relative to the wider process, proceed under a quite different social structure: one in which an anti-liberal pre-capitalist elite retained a dominant role within the state, the bourgeoisie again and again surrendered its liberal constitutional and even economic vocation and the working class was radicalized by the experience of its own rapid growth under conditions of political repression. Eventually – by 1912 at the latest – the inner contradictions arising from this combination would bring Imperial Germany to a deepening internal and external crisis from which there would be no peaceful exit. How then did the modern German pattern of combined development come about?

'Russia', Trotsky had noted, 'was unable to settle in the forms of the East because she was continually having to adapt herself to military and economic pressure from the West' (Trotsky, 1980/1932, p. 4). Something very similar could be said about the longer-term history of Germany too. As AJP Taylor put it, the Germans too were originally 'the people of the middle' (1945, p. 14), drawn to emulate the achievements of French civilization in the West even while they simultaneously interacted with much less developed societies in the East. Indeed, so pronounced was the international influence of Western development that Germany even pioneered key features of the combined development, which Trotsky would later identify in Russia. Eighteenth-century Prussia, says Trebilcock, 'provides perhaps the first European instance of effective substitution [by the state] for the lack of an extensive commercial class' (Trebilcock, 1981, p. 28).

However, the modern history of Germany's combined development truly begins with the Napoleonic Wars. In this conflict, Prussia – though it eventually emerged on the winning side – had come very close to outright geopolitical extinction, saved in 1806 only by the personal intercession of the Czar (Brunn, 1938, pp. 126–129). The resultant 'state of emergency' (Wehler, 1985, p. 11) already made internal reform unavoidable. But in the aftermath of these wars, the Junker political elite in Absolutist Prussia continued to confront a 'whip of external necessity' arising from the international unevenness of development. For even while the political and military threat of a resurgent France remained, the dismantling of Napoleon's Continental System suddenly exposed all the German states to the intense commercial pressures of coexistence with the English industrial revolution (to which the *Zollverein* of 1834 was largely a response (Bairoch, 1989, p. 15)). These were pressures that the German states – whose industrial development was 'some two and a half or three centuries in arrears' of England (Veblen, 1915, p. 65) – were ill-suited to



withstand. As late as 1840, the combined horsepower of all the steam engines operating across all 39 German states stood at a mere '6 per cent of the available British capacity' (Borchardt, 1973, p. 104). To make matters worse, these external pressures extended into Prussia's internal politics in the form of movements for liberal constitutional reform and national unification – movements that were only further strengthened by the eventual onset of industrial revolution across parts of Germany in the 1850s. Both movements threatened the position of the Protestant landholding elite in Prussia – the one (liberalism) by challenging the semi-feudal political prerogatives of the Junker aristocracy, and the other (nationalism) by demanding the dissolution of Prussia itself into a wider (and partly Catholic) German national state.

In 1861–1862, matters reached the point of a 'Constitutional Crisis', and the appointment of Otto von Bismarck as Prussian Prime Minister led to a profound change of course. Hostile to both liberalism and 'the German [nationalist] swindle in all its forms' (cited in Taylor, 1945, p. 26), Bismarck nonetheless perceived that these two movements could be outmaneuvered and even harnessed to the preservation of the old regime in Prussia. Through three wars fought over the next 8 years, he succeeded not only in diffusing the pressure for constitutional change within Prussia. He also co-opted the force of nationalism in support of his own design of a limited unification (*Kleindeutschland*), which, by excluding Catholic Austria, would preserve the hegemonic role of Prussia in the new entity. Once this new entity – the *Kaiserreich* – came into being in 1871, Bismarck was able to govern for almost a decade in alliance with the liberals, exchanging a programme of free trade and economic liberalization for the surrender of their aspirations for further political change. And the result of this strategy of defensive modernization was 'a nation that combined the most dynamic economy in Europe with a regime that in many respects had hardly emerged from feudalism' (Howard, 2007, p. 7).

Nothing was more emblematic of the hybridity of the *Kaiserreich* than the constitution Bismarck designed for it. This constitution provided for a national parliament – the *Reichstag* – elected on the most advanced (universal male) franchise of its day, protected by the legal immunity of its members and empowered to sanction or reject imperial government legislation and budgets. Yet this same parliament could not itself initiate legislation, could not form or hold accountable the actual government, could not raise direct taxes and was subject to dissolution at the will of an unelected Chancellor appointed by the Kaiser (in whom, in principle, executive power was ultimately vested). Moreover, the *Reichstag* could not override the autonomy of the 39 'federal states'. The largest of these was Prussia (two-thirds of the territory and population of Germany), and in Prussia, the rule of the Junkers was protected by a three-class franchise.



Thus, the *Kaiserreich*, both in its social structure and in its political form, was an unsteady amalgam of agrarian Absolutism with a liberal constitutional nation-state. Moreover, this was an amalgamation that compressed into a single developmental stage three processes of change – national state formation, liberal constitutional reform and industrialization – which had occurred serially in England and over a much longer period of time. And, under international pressure, the threefold process was happening ‘in a different order’ (Trotsky): the start of industrialization here preceded the existence of a national state; and constitutional struggles that were resolved in England in 1688, a century before the industrial revolution, were prolonged in the German case far into the history of industrialization. This re-sequencing could hardly fail to produce divergent results – Imperial Germany did not retrace the developmental trajectory of England or France. But it was also quite consciously manipulated by Bismarck to outmaneuver his political opponents. Universal male suffrage, for example, was a device that, as he gleefully put it, would ‘overthrow parliamentarianism by parliamentary means’ (cited in Wehler, 1985, p. 53). When it was introduced, major urbanization due to industrialization had yet to occur. With over 70 per cent of the Prussian population still on the land (Trebilcock, 1981, p. 41), the mass constituency for electoral liberalism (let alone socialism) had yet to emerge. Choosing the most advanced, democratic franchise would therefore serve in the first instance to mobilize the peasant majority, delivering mass electoral support for conservative reaction.

Such paradoxical inversions are generic to the process of U&CD. They express the ways in which inter-societal causality disrupts expectations based on unilinear interpretations of historical process. And they further underlie two of the peculiarities most often adduced in support of unit-level explanations of the belligerence of Imperial Germany: the exceptional vigour of an ‘archaic’ militaristic political class, and the structural tendencies of German industry towards cartelization and anti-liberal monopoly.

The Junker landholders, whose bitter resistance to political change lies at the core of the *Sonderweg* account of modern German history (including the classical versions provided by Veblen, 1915 and Gerschenkron, 1943), were no simple feudal hangover. To be sure, they emerged from the process of peasant emancipation having ‘retained their extensive and, for western minds, almost inconceivable juridical and political power’ over the populations on their lands (Pollard, 1981, p. 194). But they also used the emancipation process to hugely expand their estates (see Conze, 1969, pp. 63–68). And in the early decades of the nineteenth century, they imported new agricultural techniques from abroad and increased their production of grain in response to expanding demand both within Germany and beyond. Most significantly, the acceleration of England’s industrialization increased its dependence on foreign foodstuffs, and the Junkers built up a commanding position in the London market for imported



grains (Gerschenkron, 1943/1966, p. 42; Pollard, 1981, p. 195; Bairoch, 1989, p. 17). Indeed, after the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846, this inter-societal connection brought them 'to the historical peak of their economic power' (H. Rosenberg, cited in Wehler, 1985, p. 12) and converted them, temporarily, into 'fanatical free traders' (Gerschenkron, 1943/1966, p. 42), fiercely resistant to Listian calls for tariff protection of nascent German industry. In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky had noted how Peter the Great's importing of more advanced bureaucratic forms and technologies from the West had been used to reinforce (rather than dissolve) archaic social and political structures. In the present case, industrializing England interacted with a still agrarian, absolutist Prussia, producing a similarly paradoxical effect: the realization of economic liberalism in England helped prolong and strengthen a major *obstacle* to equivalent political change in Germany, and the (liberal and pro-industrial) political meaning of free trade in the first society was transformed almost into its opposite in the second.²⁰

As we have already seen, Junker support for free trade evaporated almost overnight when American (and Russian) grains began to drive them out of their export (and even domestic) markets. In 1879, Germany 'led the way' (Wehler, 1985, p. 38; Bairoch, 1989, p. 52) in a general return (England always excepted) to tariff protection. Yet if this switch to mercantilist trade policies was indeed general, it nonetheless had 'uniquely authoritarian implications' in Germany (Trebilcock, 1981, p. 84). In no other major state were agricultural tariffs being used to preserve artificially the political ascendancy of an anti-liberal landholding elite. The 'marriage of iron and rye' was thus much more than a tactical alliance between two sectors of the economy. In Germany, it became the strategic formula of combined development itself, the enduring fusion of archaic and modern elements, which expressed the particular character of German industrialization. Through it, the Absolutist elements in the German state were given a new lease of life, and German industry surrendered its liberalizing political vocation.

A parallel issue of historical timing worked a no less significant interactive effect in shaping the political economy of German industrialization when it finally took hold, around the 1850s. 'Arising late' (as Trotsky would say), German industrialization did not reproduce the English experience, in which widely dispersed, small-scale textile production had provided the technical and financial foundations for the second, more capital-intensive generation of industries that followed. Such a path was in any case now ruled out by the effects of English competition in Continental and overseas textile markets. But it was also rendered unnecessary by the 'privilege of historic backwardness'. For by this point, continuing industrialization in England had produced a technology – the railway – which, transferred into Germany, would be of 'decisive importance' (Kemp, 1985, p. 93). By its simultaneous role in fostering



national economic integration and stimulating import substitution, railway construction in Germany enabled the process of industrialization, at its outset, to

leap over stages [which had been necessary to the same process in England] No other demand could have provided the basis for the rapid adoption of British technology in the iron industry, encouraged the growth of engineering and directly and indirectly contributed so much to the opening up of Germany's coal reserves. (ibid.)

And through this inter-societal conjunction, German industry acquired a series of differentiating characteristics that it subsequently 'carried forward and developed to a higher stage' (Kemp, 1985, p. 108): domination by capital-intensive heavy industries, higher levels of concentration of capital, a more prominent role for (initially state-supported) credit institutions, a tendency towards vertical integration and a pre-eminent role for applied science.

Tariff protection of industry now reinforced these characteristics. It hastened the process of cartelization and concentration within the German economy while also promoting attempts to take over foreign markets through tactics of organized dumping (Trebilcock, 1981, p. 68). However, simultaneous protection of agriculture fundamentally distorted the relationship of the German economy to the world market (Kemp, 1985, p. 103); it prevented it from following the 'normal' path of an industrializing economy, in which rising exports of manufactured goods are matched by increasing imports of raw materials and foodstuffs. By the 1850s, Britain's trade already showed this profile, to the tune of 85 per cent and 90 per cent of its imports and exports, respectively (Lowe, 1994, p. 5), enabling a positive-sum integration with the less industrially developed societies around it. This normal pattern was never achieved by the *Kaiserreich*, which (owing to the internal demands of the 'marriage of iron and rye') aggressively promoted both industrial and agricultural exports alike: 'an otherwise heavily industrialized nation saw its state pursuing a largely agrarian policy that enabled a 'semifeudal' class to maintain its economic basis, its social status, and its political privileges' (Gordon, 1974, p. 205).

The underlying significance of this point should be brought out: the source of these effects lies not in the 'lateness' or 'backwardness' of German industrialization *per se*. It lies rather in the inter-societal unevenness of development, which juxtaposed Germany's economic conditions with those of a more advanced economy elsewhere. This juxtaposition generated the compulsion to 'follow after'; however, it also created possibilities of imitation, transfer and financial support, which would not otherwise have existed. As noted in our earlier discussion of Gerschenkron, 'lateness' and 'backwardness' are certainly relational concepts that must ultimately presuppose this inter-societal dimension. However, focussed as they are on its *unit-level effects* (that is lateness



producing accelerated, destabilizing change), they do not visualize the mechanisms composing the specifically inter-societal cause at work here. By contrast, ‘unevenness’ turns out to be a system-level concept that allows for a fuller theorization of the phenomena modelled by Gerschenkron’s schema.

The *Kaiserreich* was a puzzle to contemporary observers: Marx called it ‘a thoroughly self-contradictory and self-nullifying hermaphrodite’ (quoted in Wehler, 1985, p. 55). And it has remained the object of intense debate among historians ever since, who have argued over whether it should be defined more in terms of its modern or archaic elements, its liberal or absolutist features (Evans, 1993a, b; Lorenz, 1995). The logic of Trotsky’s idea is that both options would be mistaken. It is rather the fusion itself, the particular pattern of combined development that it comprised, which must inform the definition of the *Kaiserreich* – as indeed suggested by David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley in 1984, who even called for the use of ‘something like the classical marxist concept of “uneven and combined development”’ (1984, p. 85).

Development

Although tactically brilliant, Bismarck’s political formula of combined development became increasingly dysfunctional over time, leading eventually to a crisis of domestic governability and foreign relations alike. This crisis, which formed the context of his successors’ decision making in July 1914, grew directly out of the continuation of Germany’s combined development.

First, the ‘marriage of iron and rye’, which became central to Bismarck’s parliamentary politics from 1879 onwards, outlived its creator and resisted all subsequent attempts at reform, generating deeper and deeper contradictions as the process of industrialization matured over time. Agricultural tariffs were trebled in 1885 and then doubled again in 1887 (Wehler, p. 189), placing Germany’s combined development on a clear ‘collision course’ (Gordon) with that of Russia. Following Bismarck’s departure in 1890, his successor, Leopold von Caprivi, made a concerted attempt to change course. No less than 15 international trade agreements were due for renewal in 1892, and von Caprivi used the opportunity to reduce grain tariffs in exchange for greater access for German industrial exports in key countries. (German exports to Russia had halved between 1880 and 1887 (Wehler, p. 190).) However, the result was a storm of Junker opposition, which led to his early removal in 1895, and subsequently to a marked revival of ‘the marriage of iron and rye’. In 1900, Chancellor von Bulow built a new ‘Solidarity Bloc’ in the Reichstag around the passage of a supplementary Navy Bill in which Junker support for major naval construction was openly exchanged for a further doubling of agricultural tariffs (the ‘Bulow tariff’ of 1902). It was, wrote Max Weber at the time, ‘incompatible with the national interest in the long run ... that an economically



declining class should exert political authority' (cited in Wehler, 1985, p. 46). It meant, among other things, that the rise of organized labour with its democratic aspirations was viewed with unusual hostility and even counter-revolutionary frenzy by leading elements in the state.

And yet this rise was inevitable, as was its dismantling of the original electoral basis of the 'marriage of iron and rye'. Bismarck's use of the universal male franchise as a tool of reaction had been based on a rural majority in Prussia, which had barely declined in the six decades leading up to unification (Trebilcock, 1981, p. 41). However, between 1871 and 1914, the accelerating speed of industrialization overturned this situation, transforming the franchise into the weapon of the very forces it was designed to parry. In 1912, the Social Democrats became the largest party in the *Reichstag*, and the possibility of governing through conservative coalitions disappeared forever, leaving the Chancellor of the time, Bethmann Hollweg, to pursue an impossible 'policy of the diagonal' between dangerously polarized extremes.

Bethmann Hollweg's predicament was exacerbated by a further legacy of Bismarck's fusion of parliamentary and autocratic principles in the 1871 constitution. Executive authority was located ambiguously between Kaiser and Chancellor, with no system of cabinet government to enable consistency of policy. For almost two decades, this ambiguity was masked by Bismarck's personal domination of Wilhelm I. However, after that relationship ended (in 1888), the ambiguity became a recipe for 'polycratic chaos' (Wehler, 1985, p. 62) as successive Chancellors failed to master the system Bismarck had created. Indeed, during one period (starting in 1895), Wilhelm II even sought to restore the 'personal rule' of the monarch. In this extreme manifestation of combined development, Absolutist prerogatives were reasserted within the state at the very point where industry overtook agriculture in Germany, and the German economy as a whole began to draw abreast of its longtime English 'teacher and foe' in terms of industrial output. To be sure, the episode ended in fiasco and scandal – but not before Wilhelm had embarked on a policy of naval expansion, which was to prove financially ruinous and geopolitically catastrophic. (The decisions for *Flottenpolitik* and *Weltpolitik* were both taken in 1897, during the period 'between 1897 and 1900 [in which] Wilhelm II was his own Chancellor' Seligmann and McLean, 2000, p. 93.) By 1914, as events in the July Crisis would show, executive power remained dangerously fragmented between the Chancellery, the military establishment and the royal Court. 'Who rules in Berlin?' exclaimed the exasperated Austrian Chief of Staff, after receiving contradictory instructions from the German government and the German army command. However, as many historians have pointed out, this question 'might well have been asked before 1914' (Lowe, 1994, p. 152).

The major foreign policy consequence of the policy-making incoherence of the *Kaiserreich* – 'a chaos and instability which amazed all who witnessed it in

close action' (Kennedy, p. 213) – was that Germany gradually became locked into a simultaneous antagonism with both the major power ahead of it in the process of industrialization and the major emerging power behind it. In 1894, largely because of conflicts arising from agricultural protection, the 'loss of Russia' had already condemned German military planning (which was quite uniquely free of civilian control (Joll, pp. 91, 97, 123)) to a land war on two fronts. Now the alienation of England through naval competition meant that Germany might also have to prevail against the greatest sea power of the time.

But perhaps the most serious internal threat of all to the *Kaiserreich* in 1914 came from the breakdown of relations between the *Reich* and the federal states. Bismarck had severely restricted the powers of the *Reich*, and had made it dependent for its income on negotiated subventions from the states, coupled with the proceeds of indirect taxes. The major effect of this was to protect the internal political arrangements of the states – most notably Prussia – from interference or reform. However, the costs of naval competition with England now threatened a breakdown of this relationship. Unconstrained by equivalent limits to its fiscal powers, the British government had responded to German naval expansion with an even greater expansion of its own, funded by a rise in income tax. This was a response that the *Reich* could not match out of its existing sources of income (Berghahn, 1973; Ferguson, 1994). And first von Bülow (who fell from office over the issue in 1908) and then Bethmann Hollweg were driven to introduce bills for the creation of a national tax on the inheritance of landed estates. Eventually passed with support from the Social Democrats in 1913, the bill provoked a bitter struggle, which left the *Reich* finally alienated from its Junker conservative bases of support.

Using Gerschenkron's theoretical model, Gordon is able to capture almost all of these elements of the domestic crisis of German politics from 1912 onwards. He is also able to show that the manipulation of diplomatic confrontations as a means of managing domestic conflict was an established technique in Wilhelmine politics, extending back to Bismarck himself. There is, thus, nothing essentially unconvincing in his conclusion that, in 1914, war was the last throw of the dice by an old regime whose problems had become unmanageable:

With one desperate charge, the Reich's leadership hoped to achieve that ultimate breakthrough in *Weltpolitik* that would safeguard the nation's expansionist future and its conservative order at home. (Gordon, 1974, p. 226)

What *is* peculiar (though explicable in terms of his use of Gerschenkron's schema) is that this argument is made in support of 'the primacy of domestic politics'. For Gordon's 'spillovers' are in the end just that: mechanisms by which causes produced in one (domestic) object domain that is being theorized



are transmitted into a second (international) object domain that is not. The international scene figures as a site of effects, but not of fundamental causes. And yet, as we have already seen, the features that Gordon identifies as symptomatic of Germany's late development were themselves interactively produced by Germany's spatio-temporal location in the international structure of industrialization – a structure shaped above all by the European and Atlantic planes of uneven development discussed above.

And yet in order to explain the outbreak of war in 1914 (rather than just listing conditions that made *a* war likely), we need to picture a third plane of uneven development, intersecting the first two, and running roughly from Northwestern Europe to the Southeast of the Continent. This third plane differentiated (and interconnected) those societies whose prospects were being enhanced by the overall process of industrialization from those for which it spelled paralysis and decline. And among the latter category, the Ottoman Empire and Austria–Hungary stood to the fore: agrarian, multinational empires that found themselves coexisting with adjacent processes of industrialization and national state formation that they themselves were ill-fitted to replicate – and indeed for which their own territories seemed destined to provide raw materials for others. The key point of interconnection lay in the relationship between German and Austria–Hungary.

Ejected first from Italy (in 1859) and then from Germany (in 1866), the Hapsburg Empire had half fallen apart into two territorial parts, Hungary and Austria, under Magyar and German domination, respectively, but still sharing what now became the Dual Monarchy. This peculiar amalgam of nationalist and imperial monarchical forms was 'a political monster of a sort never seen before' (Lafore, 1966, p. 60). And it would soon be further destabilized – thrown into paralysis in fact – when uneven industrialization in its German-dominated Western half led to rising Czech demands for national recognition within the Empire. By 1897, bitter conflicts over this issue had led to the suspension of parliamentary government; thereafter, Austria and Hungary were ruled increasingly by emergency decree (Mason, 1985, p. 39). It was, however, the consequences of a further nationalist demand, running to the quite different temporality of Ottoman decline and Balkan state formation, which were to prove fatal.

Because the Czech population lived entirely within the Empire, its demands for recognition remained ultimately an internal matter. The South Slavs, by contrast, were divided between Austria and Hungary and the neighbouring provinces of the Ottoman Empire. As Ottoman control of the Balkans weakened, movements for national independence gathered pace there, drawing in the conflicting interests of the Great Powers. In 1875, perhaps even triggered by the indirect effects of the Great Depression (Geiss, 1976, p. 31), the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina revolted. Three years later, the Congress of Berlin (1878), attempting to impose a settlement, recognized both the



independence of Serbia and Montenegro and the right of Austria–Hungary to occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina. The future leader of South Slav irredentism (Serbia), and the expansion into Bosnia Herzegovina that would make Austria–Hungary an obvious target of that irredentism, were now both in place. And in the following year, the Dual Alliance tied German geopolitical calculations to the consequences of Austria–Hungary’s future dilemmas.

In concluding this alliance – the first of the peacetime military alliances that would later divide the Continent – Bismarck was seeking in part to control an inter-societal effect of his own unification of Germany. It was, after all, defeat by Prussia in 1866, which had led directly to the transformation of the Hapsburg Empire into the Dual Monarchy, together with the *Außgleich* (or ‘agreement’) that blocked recognition of other minorities beyond the Magyar and German ones. And the effects concerned the future as well as the past: not only might a further break-up of Austria–Hungary draw Germany into military conflict with Russia, but also pressure for the incorporation of Austria’s ethnic Germans into the *Reich* could destroy the *internal* balance of the *Kleindeutschland* that Bismarck had constructed. (As late as 1908, one of his successors as Chancellor wrote that ‘an increase of about fifteen million Catholics [would mean] a virtual dissolution of the German empire....’ (quoted in Joll and Martel, 2007, p. 68).) To be sure, Bismarck regarded the Balkan rivalries as being ‘not worth the healthy bones of a single Prussian grenadier’, and he used the alliance as a means of restraining and preserving Austria–Hungary. However, by 1914 these two goals had moved into contradiction with each other. Processes of state formation and irredentism in the Balkans, enabled by collapsing Ottoman power and egged on by Russian pan-Slavist ambitions, had become a threat to the survival of the Dual Monarchy. Thus, W.E. Mosse was not being completely fanciful when he argued that ‘the events of 1914 were the direct consequence of the war of 1866’ (cited in Lowe, 1994, p. 33). For Prussia’s victory had not only redirected Hapsburg policy for the first time to the South East, where its expansion would generate the South Slav problem; it had also produced the impasse in the Empire’s inner political development that would render that problem constitutionally insoluble.

In this Eastern Question, therefore, the East–West planes of unevenness among the industrializing powers intersected the North–South one between Europe and its wider geopolitical environment. Indeed, the two major crises (the Moroccan Crises of 1905–1906 and 1911), which sealed the Anglo-French configuration that Germany would fight on its Western Front, were also staged in the theatre of Ottoman decline. And it was to be a series of further crises arising at this intersection – 1908, 1912, 1914 – which, increasing in intensity, eventually detonated the Great War.



Conclusion

At an empirical level, the claim that World War I was caused by the uneven and combined development of the societies involved appears so obvious that it seems not to warrant a second look. But what if it were not just an empirical claim? What if it were the result, in the given case, of applying a hypothesis about the causal role of interactive multiplicity in social development? What if it involved the identification of a series of causal mechanisms, invisible to other theories, which enabled a fuller, more integrated theorization of the event? In that case, empirical obviousness would change its meaning: it would become instead an indicator of explanatory power. It would suggest that the hypothesis in question, the 'creative idea', which posited specific 'unobservable relations of things', had indeed laid 'bare the essential elements in play and indicate[d] necessary relations of cause and interdependency' (Waltz, 1979, pp. 9–10).

'Rather than being mere collections of laws', Waltz has written, 'theories are statements which explain them' (1979, p. 5). If we take him at his word, then Trotsky's idea would indeed qualify as a theory. For the 'collections of laws' assembled by neorealism on the one hand and Gerschenkron's model of economic backwardness on the other are both ultimately explained by the premise that historical development is not ontologically singular but multiple and interactive. Moreover, 'uneven and combined development' would also qualify as an *international* theory because the causal mechanisms that it identifies all proceed specifically from the coexistence of more than one society. And yet it would nonetheless remain a sociological theory too because that multiplicity itself is seen as an expression of the intrinsic unevenness of historical development and change. Thus, Trotsky's idea would have overcome the separation of domestic and international phenomena. Waltz, we might conclude, was right to anticipate that such an advance would 'represent a long step toward a general theory of international relations'; and he was right too in thinking that the result would be a much more powerful theory than either the system-level or unit-level perspectives could deliver on their own. His mistake was only to insist, again and again, that 'no one has shown how' to achieve this result (Waltz, 1990, p. 32). For if the arguments made above are sound, then that is exactly what Leon Trotsky did.

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Notes

- 1 Barrington Moore had described the postwar international circumstances favouring the success of Chinese Communists as 'fortuitous in the sense that they did not derive from anything taking place in China itself ...'. Noting how regularly Moore invoked international causes in his analyses, Skocpol asked 'Can an explanatory factor so systematically resorted to really be "fortuitous"?' (Skocpol, 1973, p. 29).
- 2 Eleven years later, Waltz repeated these criteria (Waltz, 1990, pp. 31–32).
- 3 The error of 'predicting outcomes from attributes' had been 'made by almost everyone, at least from the nineteenth century onwards' (1979, p. 61).
- 4 'A theory of international politics ... can tell us what international conditions national policies have to cope with. To think that a theory of international politics can itself say how the coping is likely to be done is the opposite of the reductionist error' (1979, p. 72).
- 5 This applies even to the apparent exceptions. E.H. Carr's assertion that 'Man has always lived in groups' (Carr, 1981, p. 95) appears at first to correct the problem with a sociological premise. However, in fact, this premise elides the classical perception of the sociality of humans as a species with the question of why this sociality should issue in a multiplicity of societies. Therefore, at best, it explains the existence of 'society' but not of 'societies', which it merely asserts.
- 6 Entitled 'The King of Thought: Theory, the Subject and Waltz', the conference was held at Aberystwyth University in September 2008.
- 7 An important exception here is the work of Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2000). For a detailed engagement with their explanation of political multiplicity, see Rosenberg (2010).
- 8 This applies also to Durkheim's advocates in IR, such as Ruggie (1983), Larkins (1994), Barkdull (1995) and of course Waltz himself.
- 9 In a colourful metaphor, Michael Mann later described the (re)discovery of states and geopolitics in sociological theory during the 1980s as the act of a Sociological 'raiding party', which, looting IR for useful materials, 'immediately grabbed for the Realist state' (Mann, 1995, p. 555).
- 10 For a detailed argument that U&CD *explains* political multiplicity, rather than simply including it as an additional premise, see Rosenberg (2010).
- 11 For earlier discussions, see Rosenberg (2000, 2007).
- 12 Though Trotsky had some inkling of the mechanisms here, they were much better explored by Thorsten Veblen (1915/1964, especially pages 23–39).
- 13 For a brief contextualisation of Trotsky's views in relation to Russian Marxist thought in 1905, see Knei-Paz (1978, p. 27ff).
- 14 Gerschenkron's biography and profession – a Russian emigre who, being an economic historian, was also a specialist in twentieth-century Russian thought – surely make it impossible for him to have been unfamiliar with Trotsky's writings. Indeed, his analysis of pre-modern Russian state formation and his choice of quotations from Marx against which to counterpose

his own prognoses of social development are quite uncannily similar to Trotsky's own. However, to my knowledge he does not reference Trotsky's work.

- 15 He several times mentions military considerations to which, like Trotsky, he gives an overwhelming significance in Russian history; he cites nineteenth-century Denmark as a case where interaction (with the British economy) actually *precluded* the phenomena he analysed from coming into play at all; and he regularly insisted that 'one cannot understand the industrial development of any country, as long as it be considered in isolation ...' (1962, p. 42).
- 16 The distinction here resembles Waltz's own between capabilities (which belong to units) and their distribution (which is a property of structure) (1979, p. 98).
- 17 Paul Kennedy notes that by 1900, levels of per capita industrialisation* in Europe (let alone England), which in 1750 had been broadly comparable with those obtaining elsewhere, had risen to become 18 times higher. (And when industrialisation was applied to the means of warfare, a parallel 'firepower gap' opened up, which left European countries' military resources 'fifty or a hundred times greater than those at the bottom' (1988, pp. 149–150).)
- 18 In 1879, Bismarck noted that 'There are no longer any great countries to discover; the globe is circum-navigated, and we cannot find any new mercantile nations of any great extent to which we can export' (cited in Bairoch, p. 60). Twenty years later, Chancellor von Bulow expressed the same point in shriller tones: 'We cannot allow any foreign power, any foreign Jupiter to tell us: "What can be done? The world is already partitioned",' (cited in Kennedy, p. 213).
- 19 Friedrich Liszt warned that the Germans were being reduced to 'carriers of water and hewers of wood for the Britons ... treated even worse than the downtrodden Hindu' (cited in Trebilcock, 1981, p. 40).
- 20 During this period, relations with England also produced a dynastic connection via the marriage of the Prussian Crown Prince to Queen Victoria's eldest daughter in 1858. The latter never made any secret of her desire to convert the Hohenzollerns into a constitutional monarchy. And Bismarck's determination to blunt this threat was a key reason why he 'cynically cultivated [a] popular hatred of Britain' (Calleo, 1978, p. 23). It even played an intermittently strong role in his foreign policy (Lowe, 1994, p. 96) – the flurry of imperialist expansion in 1884, the conflict over the Bulgarian succession in 1885–1886. In the event, the liberalizing ambitions of the royal couple came to nothing because the prince was mortally ill when he assumed the throne in 1888 and died within a year. But the union also left a more enduring problem in the form of the new heir – the mentally unstable Wilhelm II who for the rest of his life alternated between craven Anglophilia and German nationalist resentment of Britain's ascendancy.

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